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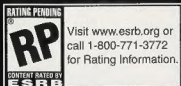


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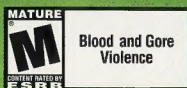


忍者


刀  
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A character in a blue and black samurai-style outfit is shown in a dynamic, crouching pose, holding a sword. The background is a bright green gradient.

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# 幻 GENMA ONIMUSHA 鬼



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### COVER STORY

## 28 RATCHET & CLANK

A platform game is nothing new to this industry. Indeed, any such game that comes along must be bigger and better than the legions which have come before it. Join us as we embark on a voyage into the innards of what could be the next big platformer to hit the market – Ratchet & Clank.



### FEATURE

## 34 TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

Shheeeeeee's baaaaack! Once believed to be dead, Eidos' spunky spelunker is finally making the leap to the next generation consoles. Yes folks, the polygonal dynamo that makes grown men drool at the mouth is returning to video games and she's not happy about it. Why is our beloved angel so dark in spirits? Read on to find out!



### FEATURE

## 42 THE BEST OF THE BEST

At the recent DICE Summit in Las Vegas, Game Informer had the honor and the privilege of interviewing some of the biggest names to ever grace the video game industry. If you don't recognize these people, you're either not a nerd, or you're not up on your video game visionaries. Learn about the past and future of our beloved industry from those who helped create it.



### FEATURE

## 36 RYGAR

It's been quite a while since we've spent time with Rygar on the NES. Many things have changed, and what we have to show you will be sure to make you drool on the pages. Game Informer has once again gone out and secured an exclusive look at an upcoming game just for you – our most loyal reader.





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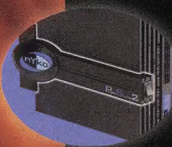
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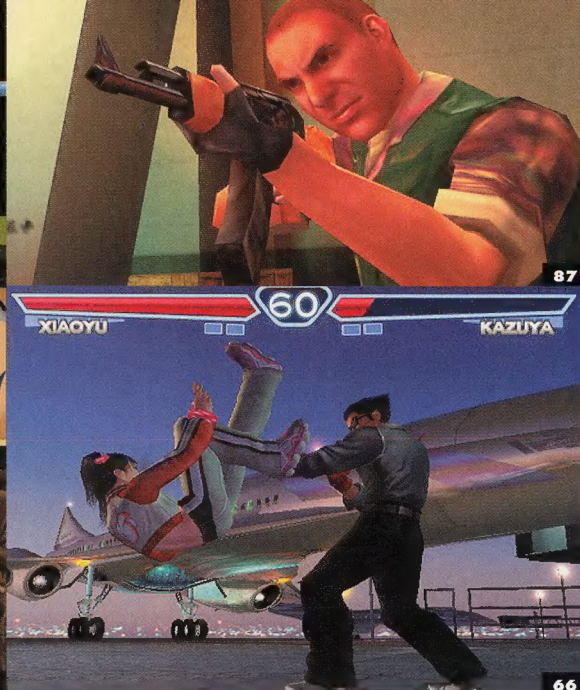
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This month's crop of editor thoughts is as bizarre as it is delicious. Who are we kidding? You people could care less about this crap! In case you do care about it, we apologize ahead of time. We're not sure what got into us, but you can be sure that it won't happen again, sir! Honest.

### 14 GI SPY

The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

### 16 DEAR GI

Listen up! We've been getting way too much mail concerning a certain Super Smash Bros. Melee code. We're settling it once and for all in Dear Gi, then we never want to hear about it again! Got it? Oh yeah...There's some potty-training pointers in there this month too. Don't say we didn't warn you.

### 20 NEWS

This has been an important month for news. We have the latest on the deal between Square and Nintendo, Sony's online plans, and some startling revelations concerning new Game Boy Advance technology.

### 56 PREVIEWS

Leading off Previews this month is the mammoth multi-platform title, Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind. Keep on flippin' to find Final Fantasy XI, MechAssault, Tekken 4 and a whole lot more. Yes, we know that rhymed, but we didn't mean to do it! Why don't you go eat some suet.

### 76 REVIEWS

You want to know what's good, don't you? Read this section, and you'll find out what to spend all of that allowance money on. In a new twist, we're going to have to ask for a cut of that money due to the fact that we're all broke from betting at the track. Cough it up, junior!

### 94 CHARTS

What's hot? What's not? What's up? What's down? It's not NASDAQ, it's the Retail Sales Data and the GI editors' Top 10 Games.

### 98 SECRET ACCESS

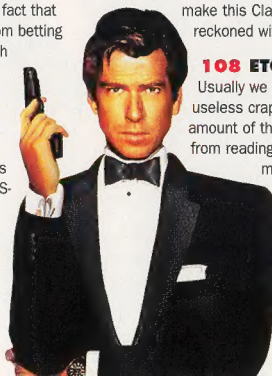
Here's the top-secret code to get into this month's Secret Access section: 1-2-3-4-5. Thank God for Spaceballs. Without that movie we'd have no comedic repertoire whatsoever.

### 102 CLASSIC GI

*Tron* was one of the most overlooked movies of 1982, and it still irks us! In light of all the brouhaha surrounding the 20th Anniversary DVD release, and the new game, we decided to take a look back at what made *Tron* tick. That, plus the usual classic reviews and our GoldenEye strategy guide make this Classic GI a force to be reckoned with.

### 108 ETC

Usually we pack ETC chock-full of useless crap. Not this month! The amount of things you could learn from reading this section might make your head explode. Maybe you should put on a helmet or something.







Best RPG of '03

Computer Gaming World



Top 20 Games of '03

GameSpot



#1 Xbox Game of '03

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• *Download new adventures. Included with the PC version is "The Elder Scrolls Construction Set". Create, share, and download new characters, dungeons, quests and more.*

# The Elder Scrolls III MORROWIND

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Blood  
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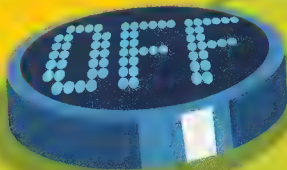


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# EDITORS' FORUM

## THE WILL TO KILL



Between DICE and the Game Developers Conference, I spent most of my time this issue talking and listening to developers from around the world, and I learned some interesting things. For one, game developers are people, too—contrary to what publishers might say. In fact, these are the people whose creative ideas and vision make all the great games that we play possible. Without them, every console or PC is just a boring old box.

Unfortunately, I also learned that these guys (and gals) have a responsibility to try and make their company money (whodda thunk?), and many times are forced by publishers to complete games that the creators themselves aren't too happy with. For most people in the industry, this statement is not a revelation. I have a feeling, though, that the average consumer doesn't realize that bad games are knowingly published each and every month, and the developer is not always happy about it. This makes it very important for readers to pay attention to who develops what products, since

the more respected development houses will be given the time and resources they need to make quality titles.

I, like many others, wish that publishers would choose to cancel some of these stinkers; eat the cost of pre-production and technology development; and just consider it part of doing business. The sad fact is, however, that this will never happen. Besides, it is difficult to predict what will and what won't be a good game until it's finished. Well...sometimes. Other times, it's pretty obvious; but people don't have the chutzpah to kill a project even though it is necessary. Plus, if all the games were good, what would you need Game Informer for? My stupid letters?

I'd like to thank Mark Cerny for the headline, and encourage you all to read the DICE feature—it's an eye opener. Perhaps it will teach everyone some things about how titles are made and about the people who make them. After all, we owe them for all the great games we've got (and they owe us for all the cash they've got).

*Andy*  
Andy McNamara  
Editor  
andy@gameinformer.com

### REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

The console battle has taken a strange detour as of late. The GameCube and Xbox have basically become the PlayStation 2's little brothers. Seriously, how many hand-me-down ports have there been in the last few months? Compare this with the quality and quantity of first-party software, and you can see where I'm coming from. Microsoft is doing its part to find an identity, and is releasing a fair number of noteworthy releases, but Halo is still what I would consider to be the only title A in the entire lineup. On the other hand, Nintendo isn't necessary focusing on the system war, but rather how long it can delay games. The only company that is doing its part to keep gamers overfilled with joy is Sony. I want a war! As of now, it's nothing more than a schoolyard fight between a seven-foot bully and two scrawny nerds. Lame!

### MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com

Video game violence is still under fire from all sides, most recently with the controversy surrounding Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto III and State of Emergency, in addition to a proposed Georgia law that would make selling M-Rated titles to a minor a punishable offense. With this in mind, I tuned into the Oscars and noticed a disturbing double standard in the way media treats the film industry versus the game industry. The press would have you believe that GTA III is one step above child pornography. However, watching the closing Oscar ceremony, one couldn't help but notice that many of the films being honored had content that would make most developers blush. For example, Denzel Washington's character in *Training Day* engages in drugs, sex, and violence at a rate that makes Max Payne look like a Girl Scout. Halle Berry won for her role in *Monster's Ball*, a film that featured graphic sex and violence against women, and Best Director nominee Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* was not only ultra-violent, but accused of racism by many activists. Funny, you don't see Sen. Lieberman coming out strong against any of these films. It certainly couldn't have anything to do with all the fundraising Hollywood does for the Democratic Party, could it?

### KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG

kristian@gameinformer.com

I'm sitting here thinking back on last year's video game festivities, I'm reminded of my number-one gaming experience of the past 12 months. During those terrible days when all of the editors were working in a room the size of a closet, waiting for our main space to be built, Kato and myself embarked upon a game of Madden NFL 2002 for the ages. It was evening, the issue had just been put to bed earlier that day, and the two of us were messing around with the PS2 version of Madden. Soon enough, we found ourselves down by one touchdown with only 1:56 left in the game. We drove 80 yards, scored a TD to be, then recovered an on-side kick, drove into the red zone, and watched Randy Moss haul in a deflected pass for the game-winning touchdown. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, and most of all, wonderful!

### JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIAN

justin@gameinformer.com

I still consider 2D fighting games superior over those in 3D. I may be a purist, but I have good reason for my stance. Back in the Street Fighter II days, it was much easier to get to know your character. Each button meant something based on the state of your opponent, and combos were in their fledgling stages. For example, as a youth, I mastered both Ryu and E. Honda. I knew what attack to use in any given situation, and which of my opponent's moves would cancel mine out and vice versa. This brought about so much more than the infinite move, button-mashing 3D brawlers of today. Yes, you can still take the time to memorize a fighter's tactics, but since you can just slam on the buttons to get victory just as easily, why bother? I love the DOAs and Soul Caliburs of the world, but nothing tops Street Fighter Alpha 3—the pinnacle of fighting games.

### KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com

I'm going to admit a pretty embarrassing fact: I'm a bit behind the times. A couple of my reviews this month opened doors that may have been better kept closed. I'm talking about first-person shooters. I mean, of course I've played Doom and Star Wars: Dark Forces, but I usually just shrugged my shoulders at the genre. Then, I stepped up to Deus Ex: The Conspiracy for the PS2. All together now: "How freakin' long has that game been out for the PC, you idiot?!!?" I know, but I'm just now finding out about how awesome its devil's. Next was Global Ops, a Counter-Strike-esque squad-based affair. It wasn't too long before I was doing my best Kristian impression, as I screamed "From where?!" whenever I was unexpectedly capped. Good times, good times. As for Counter-Strike, I just might have to look into it. It's only been ages since my brother started dragging out his kill ratio. It's time for a little childhood payback. You may ask, "What about MMORPGs?" That's where I put my foot down. At least until Star Wars Galaxies comes out in 2003.



Fifty years from now the editorial staff spend their golden years at the Fairlawn Retirement Home for Elderly Gamers. 1. Andy is scolded yet again by the head nurse for reckless driving of his scooter chair. 2. Kato runs the exciting Saturday night bingo game. 3. Pokémon is still popular. (left to right) Paul, Kato, Kristian and Justin swap cards. 4. Matt plays a high stakes game of shuffleboard. 5. Irregularly causes angry accusations to fly between Reiner (right) and Justin (left) while getting some sun on the porch.





# IT'S TIME TO DUEL

Are you strong enough to become the King of Games?





[illegible][illegible]

3



8

7



4



6



5

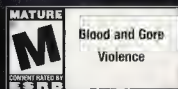


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# DEAR GI

## QUICKIE COMPLAINT

You really need to stop with these Quickie reviews! They usually tell me nothing about the game. I know you guys get a lot of games to review, but how long can it take to write a few paragraphs on a game you've played for hours. To show you what I now think of your once good magazine, I wrote a Quickie on you guys at GI:

*This mag sucks badly. The layout is horrible and the reviews are pointless. I found using the magazine to assist in my dog's potty training to be a better use for it than reading it. I was hoping for this magazine to be good, but it sucks. This mag sucks. Let me repeat that so it looks like I'm actually reviewing and so I can fill this space.*



Joe Jay  
Via email

"Dog's potty training" – that's good stuff! Tee-hee. Although we're still smarting from the sting of your rapier wit, let us attempt to explain ourselves. Like you, we wish that we could give every game more space in the magazine. However, our Quickie reviews are not the result of our laziness, but rather a simple lack of space. Currently, there are four console systems on the market (counting the PSone). Throw in the GBC, the GBA, and PC, and we literally have thousands of games that could be covered each year. Unfortunately, we only have so many pages in which to try to review this deluge of product. Obviously, some games don't make the cut. However, it has always been our policy to review as many titles as possible, so we instituted the Quickie review as a way of covering games that would be otherwise passed over. We try our best to give an accurate overview of a product's strengths and weaknesses in this brief forum, and, hopefully, we are successful in doing that.

## SONIC HOAX

Hi, guys! I'm Jay and I love your magazine. I have a question: My friend said that it's possible to play as Tails and Sonic in Super Smash Bros. Melee. Is this true? He also sent this from some cheat site:

"To unlock Sonic and Tails, you must enter into multi-man Melee and choose Cruel Melee. Pick your character and get ready to fight. Get a high score of 20 KOs and Sonic and Tails will appear to challenge you at the SAME TIME. You must defeat them in order to use them. Good Luck. You'll need it."

Can you verify this?

Jay  
Via email

This code, which actually started as an April Fools' joke in another gaming magazine, has been circulating around the Internet for some time now. Sadly, for Sega fans, it was just that – a joke. We suspected this was nothing more than a hoax, and a representative from Nintendo confirmed this hunch, commenting that Super Smash Bros. Melee was completed well before Nintendo and Sega had reached the licensing agreement that brought Sonic and the gang to GameCube.

As long as we're on the subject, here is a list of other rumored hidden characters that DO NOT appear in Super Smash Bros. Melee:

- Bubsy
- Action Man
- Glover
- Raziel
- ToeJam & Earl
- B.D. Joe from Crazy Taxi
- The Cincinnati Bengals from Madden NFL 2002
- Former Vice President Walter Mondale
- Cher
- Shadow Man
- Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen

## A GREAT IDEA

I've had an epiphany. As game editors, you analyze a great deal of games. You possess the ability to say what needs to happen to games; to change them into the perfect experience, like that of FF VII and Metal Gear Solid 2. So my question is: Why doesn't a company like Square Soft or Rare ask for the help from a business like GI to help them with their games? Now, I know personal taste comes into play here, and game designers would have to swallow their pride, but I think gaming could really be brought to another level if this happened. (The newest installment of Zelda should be the first one changed).

Tenacious Trey  
Via aol.com

Tenacious Trey, you are a man of infinite wisdom. For years, we have fought the good fight, trying to turn the eyes of the video game industry toward the light. Our noggins hold a huge untapped ocean of gaming acumen, but, so

far, those in power have turned a blind eye to our brilliant visions. Sure, we don't have any programming skills; our drawings resemble stick figures that would be laughed out of an elementary art class; and our knowledge of game design techniques could fit in an undersized thimble. That doesn't mean that we couldn't give video games the shot in the arm they so badly need. The fact that we have to waste our considerable intellects spewing venom at half-assed Game Boy Advance games every month is a travesty. Really, it's like Albert Einstein reviewing lawnmowers for *Popular Mechanics*! That's it – we're outta here – get Sony on the phone!

## EMULATION ETHICS

I recently read the Dear GI in issue #107, which had a letter about game piracy. This brought something to my attention. A lot of my friends like to download old SNES games, such as Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy III, off the Internet and play them on special emulators. I was wondering if this is illegal as well, or if this somehow hurts companies. Thanks.

John Gromatsky  
Huntington, NY

The subject of emulation has been hotly debated for the last few years. While everyone acknowledges the harm caused by piracy of current game software, emulation seems to exist in a bit of an ethical gray area. Unlike game piracy rings, emulation sites are most often run with the intention of preserving gaming history. Most people who run them are not motivated by financial gain, only the desire to allow people to access and play games for dead systems that may be hard to find. This is all well and good, but many companies, most notably Nintendo and the Interactive Digital Software Association, have come out strongly against emulation, citing serious issues of copyright infringement. This quote from an emulation

FAQ on Nintendo's website spells out the company's position loud and clear:

*"The introduction of video game emulators represents the greatest threat to date to the intellectual property rights of video game developers. As is the case with any business or industry, when its products become available for free, the revenue stream supporting that industry is threatened... Distribution of a Nintendo emulator trades off of Nintendo's goodwill and the millions of dollars invested in research & development and marketing by Nintendo and its licensees. Personal Websites and/or Internet Content Providers sites that link to Nintendo ROMs, Nintendo emulators and/or illegal copying devices can*





[illegible]



be held liable for copyright and trademark violations."

While the motivations behind emulation are often pure, the simple fact is that running an emulation website could place you in serious legal trouble. As for using emulators and emulation ROMs, that is a moral issue that all our readers need to sort out for themselves.

## PROPS TO THE OLD SCHOOL

Hey, what's up? The reason I'm writing this letter is to compliment you guys about acknowledging the fact that video games lately have become all too cinematic and have almost lost touch with the true Zen feeling of the old-school. Games in general today have forgotten about their legendary roots of requiring and/or honing skills, instead of walking around collecting stuff, flipping switches or any of that other crap. Maximo is a perfect example of a next-gen game that caters to the real gamer, because it's actually a game and not merely a tech demo. Stories? I love good stories in my game, but I don't want the story to destroy the actual reason I purchase games. Can't we have both? Remember Ninja Gaiden and the cinema scenes? Good times. Good story (for its time). Terrific gameplay. That was gaming at its best. The point of this letter is that Maximo and a handful of other games (mostly on Dreamcast...sigh) are a step in the right direction toward getting back to what gaming is all about...the gameplay. No more wandering aimlessly and saving, only to pick it up three months later and play it for 15 minutes before getting tired and walking away. I want to feverishly be able to postpone my life to finish this grand epic in terms of control, style, innovations and, of course, great gameplay. Linear is fine with me. Thanks for hearing my rantings out.

Pablo Sarmiento  
Via aol.com



Since our Maximo issue, many readers have echoed your sentiments, and rallied against the hours of cinematics in games like Metal Gear Solid 2 and Final Fantasy X. We certainly hope there is room for all types of games, cinematic or old-school. Maximo was a welcome blast from the past, and we would encourage other game companies to pursue that action-oriented style of gaming. One thing is certain - if gamers want more old-school games, some company out there will be willing to make them. At the end of the day, we all vote with our dollars.



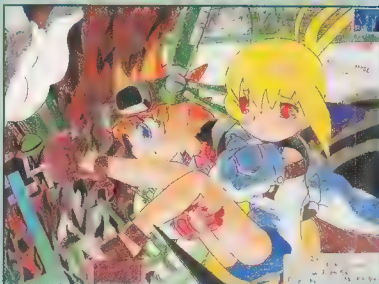
**Unknown**  
We've lost this artists' name because we were afraid Justin Timberlake was going to beat him/her up!



**Doris Leung**  
Can you believe someone wanted to throw away this perfectly good television antenna?



**Katie Keable**  
This is nice, but where's Disco Stu?



**Julian Do**  
"He's cute, but wearing oversized ski goggles on your head is soooo 1999!"



## MAY WINNER!

**Jason Rodriguez**  
Welcome to the bizarre world of Miyamoto

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

**Send to:**  
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**Spencer Graham**  
This guy looks like he eats boogers. Gross!



# AGGRESSIVE INLINE

05.30.02

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PlayStation 2



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# GI NEWS

## SQUARE AND NINTENDO FINALLY REUNITE!

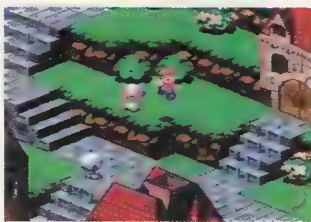
In a series of events that took the gaming world by surprise, **Nintendo** has announced that it is once again partnering up with **Square Soft** to produce games. This includes at least one title this year. Leading up to this shock, rumors had Square teaming with everyone from Nintendo to **Microsoft**. Late last year, gamers were equally surprised when **Sony** bought a 19% interest in the makers of **Final Fantasy**, making them the second-largest shareholder of the company. This seemed to put an inevitable end to talks of a reunion between Nintendo and Square – which had been speculated upon and wished for ever since the two companies' working relationship fractured in 1996.

The thrust of the partnership between Square and Nintendo revolves around one man: **Akitoshi Kawazu**. Gamers will recognize his name from such titles as **SaGa Frontier**, **Legend of Mana**, and the **Final Fantasy** series. So far, he is the sole employee of the **Game Designers' Studio (GDS)**. Square has set up this subsidiary to produce titles under the new deal with Nintendo. Kawazu and GDS will be responsible for the "conceptual" designs for any new software. From here, Square itself will handle the developmental end of the process.

Square confirmed to *Game Informer* that its Japanese offices were considering three to four titles for release on Nintendo platforms between now and March of 2003, although it stressed that no specific games had been decided upon. While imagining **Final Fantasy** on the **GameCube** is an attractive vision, the early details do not point to such a thing happening. In fact, GDS' intent is to focus on bringing Square properties to the **Game Boy Advance**. For its part, Nintendo has stated that these releases will make use of the connectivity between the GC and GBA, so the next-gen console will not be entirely out of the loop.

In January of this year, Nintendo's President, **Hiroshi Yamauchi**, set up a special reserve of money dubbed "**Fund Q**." At the time, these monies were being earmarked to foster creative ideas from small developers. Now it looks like **Fund Q** may provide for Akitoshi Kawazu and GDS to create games for Nintendo. Square, however, has been quick to point out that some of the details regarding this deal are still being worked on – some of which are exactly where, and to what tune, the GDS' monetary support will come from. **Fund Q**, and its coffers of 10 million yen are being seen as one of the possible sources of cash.

Square and Nintendo have shared a very long – and very tumultuous – history. In the mid-'80s, **Final Fantasy** was a life preserver to the company that had been producing games for Nintendo's **Famicom Disk System** in Japan. After releasing **Kind Knight (King's Knight)** in the US and **Highway Star (Rad Racer)** here, among others, and finding little success, Square was ready to close its doors. Believing that the RPG he was making was the last software of



In 1995, Nintendo released **Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars** for the SNES. Until now, it was the last Square developed title for Nintendo, and the only collaboration between legends **Shigeru Miyamoto** and **Hironobu Sakaguchi**.

any kind the company would ever put out, game designer **Hironobu Sakaguchi** dubbed his latest creation "**Final Fantasy**."

As Square rolled on with titles like **Chrono Trigger**, **Final Fantasy VI (FF III)** in the US) and **Secret of Mana** on Nintendo's Super Famicom system (SNES over here), the bond between the two grew. **Hironobu Sakaguchi** and **Donkey Kong** creator **Shigeru Miyamoto** even worked together on a title for the SNES – **Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars** – the only collaboration between the two to date. It was also, until now, the last title Square made for a Nintendo platform.

The acrimonious split in 1996 was due to a difference of opinion on the cartridge format. Nintendo was preparing to release the **Nintendo 64** – a console that still utilized the cartridge. This meant more costs for developers and less technological freedom. Sony's use of CD-ROM technology, on the other hand, was alluring to Sakaguchi, who was busy dreaming up **Final Fantasy VII**. The game's use of elaborate FMV sequences and sweeping, orchestrated music was too much for Nintendo's format to handle. Estimates from Square say that putting **FF VII** on the N64 would have required no less than 13 carts. Thus, on January 31, 1997, **Final Fantasy VII** debuted on Sony's **PlayStation** in Japan. Nintendo, most notably NCL President **Hiroshi Yamauchi**, was extremely bitter with Square's decision to abandon the N64, a move they viewed as stinging betrayal.

So where, exactly, does this leave Square, Nintendo, and Sony? Well, it looks like the future between the two may be as cloudy as their past was muddy. First of all, **Final Fantasy XI** is set to come out on the **PlayStation 2** this May in Japan. Officials from Square have said that it would not jeopardize its relationship with Sony or disrupt those current and future games (explicitly including **FFXI** and **FFXII**) that have been tabbed for the PS2. Behind the scenes, it is rumored that Sony officials are less than pleased with this new deal. And if we take GDS' initial focus – the GBA – as any indication, big hitters like **Final Fantasy** may be safe with Sony despite its hook-up with **GameCube**. Interestingly, however, back when Sony purchased its stake in Square, Sony's President, **Ken Kutaragi**, stated, "We're not asking Square to make games only for PlayStation 2."

Still, new and old franchises are expected to appear on a Nintendo platform, with the rumored initial front runner being **Final Fantasy Tactics** for the GBA. At this stage in the game, however, it looks like almost anything is up for grabs. Perhaps a compromise will be reached in which Square's franchises will be divided between Nintendo and Sony. Or even better yet, the duo of **Hironobu Sakaguchi** and **Shigeru Miyamoto** could be triumphantly reunited for a **Super Mario RPG** sequel and other new franchises. Whatever the outcome, this sudden teaming of Square and Nintendo has gamers everywhere believing in miracles and expecting many more in the future.







## SONY GOES OFFICIAL ON LINE

**Sony of America** announced that it plans to debut online services for the **PlayStation 2** in August. A **Network Adaptor** unit, retailing for \$39.99, will be released concurrently with the launch, and is required for play. This adaptor will feature both dial-up modem and broadband capabilities. It will also come with a start-up disc, but won't be configured to any specific ISP.

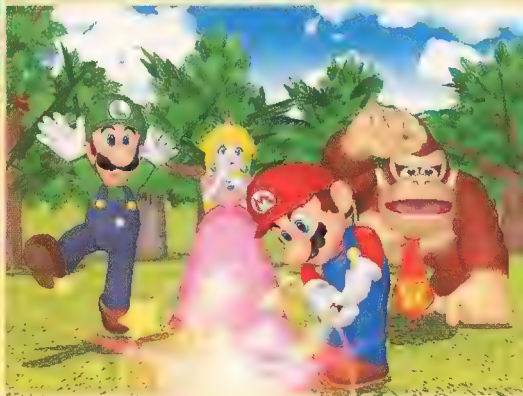
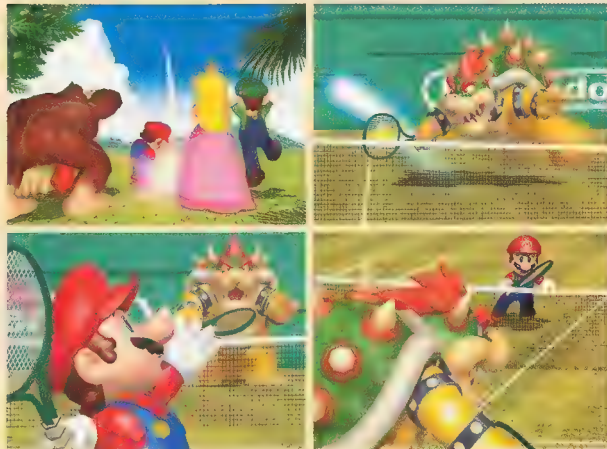
Sony plans to feature at least a dozen games when the network starts in August. **Twisted Metal Black: Online**, **Frequency**, **SOCOM: US Navy Seals**, and more are expected at launch. As far as third-party titles go, **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3** (from **Activision**), and **Sierra's Tribes: Aerial Assault** will just be some of those involved. Sony believes that third-party support for network play won't be a problem. SCEA's President, **Kaz Hirai**, said that gaming online with the PS2 will not involve a "pay to play" format.

No announcement was made regarding the hard drive for the console. Sony says that going online with the PS2 won't require it, and that Sony would wait until August to evaluate when it should be released.

## NINTENDO ANNOUNCES NEW MARIO SPORTS TITLES

As the delays of high profile **Nintendo** titles keep rolling in, we were pleased that at least two more A-list **GameCube** games are on the way. Recently, **Nintendo of Japan** issued some mouth-watering screenshots of new **Mario Tennis** and **Mario Golf** sequels. Development of both games will be in the able hands of **Camelot Software** – the company that developed the **Nintendo 64** versions of both franchises, as well as the recent **Game Boy Advance** smash **Golden Sun**.

For **Mario Tennis**, Camelot has been seeking input from pro tennis player **Kamio Yone**, which should help them incorporate a new level of depth into the all-new gameplay mechanics that are being implemented. As you can see, both games remain faithful to the visual look of their previous incarnations, enhanced with gorgeous CG effects. As always, **Nintendo of America** has been virtually mum about both products, and release dates and final titles are undisclosed as of press time.







## R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

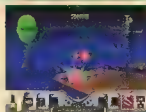
## CITY CRUISER

The next generation of interactive and immersive video games is here. Taking advantage of the leaps and bounds made in video game and computing technology, developer Armarian Studios is preparing to unleash what is sure to be a colossal hit in the gaming world. Seizing a never-before-available opportunity, Armarian was able to rent a number of Department of Defense imaging satellites to help lay the groundwork for this title. Utilizing classified technologies, these satellites took extensive imagery of the top 30 most populated American urban areas and their surrounding environs (up to 20 miles from downtown areas) over a number of months. With this data in hand, the developer was then able to make exact replicas of each of these cities – right down to daily traffic patterns, pedestrian population, police patrols, street signs, and house colors. For a fee, gamers are able to download their city of choice, and speed to their heart's content. Those who grow tired of the free-drive portion of the title will have a mission section where they must complete a number of different tasks around town to unlock various vehicles and paint jobs. Aside from the incredible gaming opportunities, City Cruiser and its technology will most likely revolutionize student driving curriculum, eliminate inaccurate directions (you can now test them in advance), and open new opportunities for law enforcement. Put simply, City Cruiser will be the driving fanatic's wildest dream come true.



## NAME THAT GAME

This game was released when a company would actually give you a free cartridge when you bought its new console. Packed in with the Atari Jaguar, this title was also notable because, unlike fellow shooter Star Fox for the SNES, it featured the ability to move with complete freedom throughout its worlds. Your mission was to recover Federation pods from the clutches of the Pernitia Empire using your morphing, prototype T-Griffon space ship.



(Answer on page 26)

## NEW GBA BREAK-THROUGHS

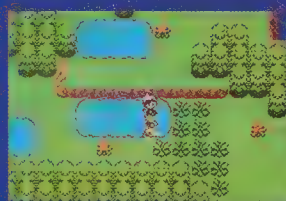
Italian developer **Raylight Studios** has been busy trying to get the most out of **Nintendo's** handheld, and if this early proof is any indication, it is succeeding quite well. The company has designed a spectacular 3D engine for the platform called **Blue Roses**. The games below are merely test examples of what's possible from the latest version of the engine, but even they are impressive.

The engine is capable of putting out more than 3,000 polygons per second in an average scene, motion-capture animation, lens flare, particle systems, and more. Raylight promises that future builds of the engine will be able to support everything from fog to lighting and transparency effects. In movies on the company's website ([www.raylight.it](http://www.raylight.it)), small demos of what Blue Roses' technology is capable of are available. They show a futuristic **Wipeout**-esque racer using a 3D foreground with a 2D background scrolling behind it. Also shown are a 3D jet, helicopter, and rally car. Each contains camera work to fully show-off the engine's capabilities, while a **Resident Evil**-like demo shows some detail on its character model's face.

Although Raylight is currently developing **GB Rally 2 Advance**, among other projects, it is not known when Blue Roses will become available in any internally- or externally- developed projects.



## FIRST LOOK AT GBA'S POKÉMON



Even more certain than either death or taxes, and arguably more fun, is a new **Game Boy Advance** version of **Nintendo's Pokémon**. Information is scant at this point, but an early screen has surfaced for the tentatively-titled **Pokémon Advance** game. Sticking with a look similar to other incarnations of the famous series, the newest in this monster-collecting saga

should be coming down the pipe before 2003. Recently, Nintendo's Communications Director **Satoru Iwata** said, "Development on the next generation of **Pokémon Gold** and **Silver** is progressing... and will be scheduled for release possibly within the year in Japan and America on the Game Boy Advance."

As for a **GameCube** incarnation of Pokémon, the future isn't as clear. "Our plans for the **Pokémon GameCube** title have changed somewhat. We were approaching development from one angle, but a definitive direction for the project hasn't been decided." *Game Informer* contacted representatives for **Nintendo of America**, but they refused comment on the status of any of its upcoming Pokémon products. They did tell us, however, that we could expect a big announcement regarding the franchise at this year's **E3** convention in May. We'll definitely let you know more as soon as we hear it.



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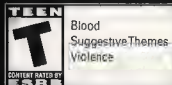
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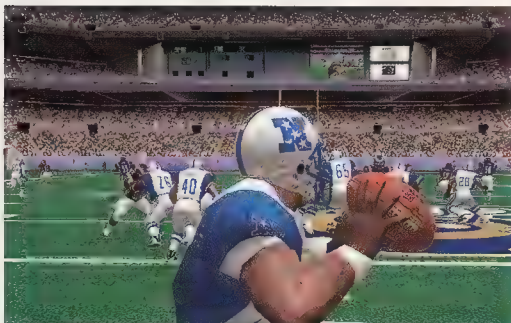


## GI NEWS

# MICROSOFT SPREADS ITS FEVER ONLINE

Last year's **NFL Fever 2002** for the **Xbox** was a pleasant surprise. It was not only a solid launch title for developer **Microsoft**, but it also offered up competition to more established franchises such as **EA's Madden NFL** and **Sega's NFL 2K** series. **NFL Fever 2003** has just been officially announced, and it is already upping the stakes with online play.

Although Sega started online console sports with **NFL 2K1** on the **Dreamcast**, the Xbox's hard drive will continue to be a trump card over the other games and systems. The title will likely extend beyond just allowing you to play against strangers across the country, including updateable rosters and other amenities. Microsoft has already said that you will be able to download the weather conditions in your team's hometown, so it can be replicated in the game when you kickoff. *Game Informer* previously spoke with Xbox's General Manager **J. Allard**, who told us that he envisioned online football tournaments as just the tip of the iceberg to excite the *Fever* faithful. Microsoft says that it plans to start its online initiative this summer. **NFL Fever 2003** is expected to ship this September.



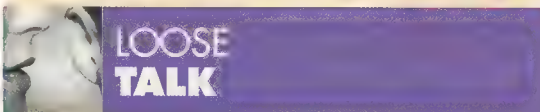
**GOOD** – **Rockstar Games** is extending its control over gamers by bringing **State of Emergency's** revolutionary themes to the **Xbox** before the end of the year. The announcement was made, ironically, at a meeting discussing just how much money parent company **Take-Two** had made.

**BAD** – Rush hour traffic. Getting mugged. Losing your keys. **Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet** being delayed again until September. Telemarketers. Going to jail...

**GOOD** – **Sony Online** is releasing a new **EverQuest** expansion pack named **Planes of Power**. It'll feature **Shadow of Lucien's** engine and 18 new zones. More is only good, not necessarily better.

**BAD** – **Acclaim UK's** PR department sent out a joke press release about its new "deadvertising." It was asking family members of the deceased to come forward to offer their graveyard headstones as ad space for **PS2** title **Shadow Man: Second Coming**. It was a joke, and besides: Bad press is better than no press at all.

**UGLY** – Developer **VisionScape** is working with the band **Creed** on a proposed video game featuring the band called **Revelations**. Hopefully it'll involve **Creed** travelling to the future and seeing themselves as washed up, no-talent losers. Don't worry about buying the game to find out, we'll let you in on that one for free.



Whenever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, *Game Informer* experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else! In the industry and need to get back at the boss who fired you by spilling some secrets? Email us at [loosetalk@gameinformer.com](mailto:loosetalk@gameinformer.com) and we'll be your shoulder to cry on.

**Loose Talk** has learned that **Sony** has started work on **Legend of Dragoon 2** for the **PlayStation 2**. It is unknown exactly at what point the project is at. Therefore, a release isn't expected any time soon.

In an interview with Japan's **Famitsu** magazine, **Gran Turismo** producer **Kazunori Yamauchi** stated that the still nascent **GT 4** will be the last title in the series for the **PlayStation 2**. Any future *Turismos* will have to wait until the **Sony's** next system.

**Alice** creator **American McGee** (and his production company, **Carbon6 Entertainment**) is working with **Rune: Viking Warlord** developer **Human Head** on a new game based on **The Wizard of Oz**. Thus far, plans call for the game to have a unique graphical look, best described as a "living pop-up book." No word yet as to an official publisher or release date for the game.

Okay, this time we mean it. After running the gamut of the rumor mill for over a year, **Sony** is expected to announce a price cut for the **PlayStation 2** at **E3** in May. We contacted the company about the matter, but it could only say that it wasn't ready to make a statement on the matter.

**Loose Talk** has heard that famed **Nintendo** developers **Rare** may be moving on. The company's contract with the **GameCube** makers is ending, leaving open the chance that the studio behind **Banjo-Tooie**, **Conker's Bad Fur Day**, **Donkey Kong 64**, **Perfect Dark**, et. al. could be going else where.



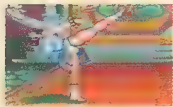
## VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

The rap game is to be sold, not to be told. We may just be a loaf of white bread here at Game Informer – we don't own a single Cross Colors ensemble – but we have much love for the hip-hop heroes in the world who are keepin' it real in the twenty-oh-two. See how much science you can drop on this month's trivia, and you'll be rewarded with which rapper you should worship. Peace out.

### Question 1. The dangerous Pokémon Gyrodos is evolved from which other monster?

- A. Dratini
- B. Goldeen
- C. Ampharos
- D. Magikarp

### Question 2. Street Fighter II's arrival onto the Super Nintendo from the arcade in 1992 was a monumental step for both fighting games and home game conversions. Which of these modifications was made in the transition?



- A. The bathtub in E. Honda's stage didn't overflow
- B. Guile no longer combs his hair after winning
- C. Chun Li was given more "conservative" underwear during high kicks
- D. The breakout signs were removed from either end of Ryu's stage

### Question 3. Games made in Japan are constantly localized for the US market. What is the first video game to come over from Japan?

- A. Pole Position
- B. Gunfight
- C. Donkey Kong
- D. Zaxxon

### Question 4. When video games first came under scrutiny by the US government, it was all know of Senator Joseph Lieberman's role, but who helped him organize a Senate hearing on video game violence?

- A. Christopher Bond (R – MO)
- B. Jesse Helms (R – NC)
- C. Jack Reed (D – RI)
- D. Herb Kohl (D – WI)

### Question 5. Which wrestler didn't show up in the obscure Super Nintendo title, WCW SuperBrawl?

- A. "Double A" Arn Anderson
- B. Johnny B. Badd
- C. Big Van Vader
- D. Flyin' Brian Pillman

### Question 6. Square's classic PS-X strategy/RPG, Final Fantasy Tactics, revolved around a complex job system. What prerequisite did your character need to turn him/her into a Calculator?



0 Vanilla Ice



1-2 Bushwick Bill



4-6 Flavor Flav



7-9 Snoop Dogg



10 Of Dirty Bastard

### Score & Rank

- A. Level 4 Priest, Level 4 Wizard, Level 3 Time Mage
- B. Level 4 Chemist, Level 2 Lancer, Level 4 Time Mage
- C. Level 6 Squire, Level 3 Priest, Level 4 Mediator
- D. Level 3 Monk, Level 3 Archer, Level 4 Chemist

### Question 7. When CD media was new to video games, many crappy Sega CD games were also crappy 3D0 games. Which of the following Sega CD games were 3D0 gamers spared from having to play?

- A. Sewer Shark
- B. Corpse Killer
- C. Surgical Strike
- D. Supreme Warrior

### Question 8. John Madden has been featured in dozens of video games, but he's far from the only sports figure who's had his name on the cover of a video game. Which of these jocks has only had one lone game named after him?

- A. Wayne Gretzky
- B. Emmitt Smith
- C. Charles Barkley
- D. Mike Ditka



### Question 9. Satan shows up in numerous video games. However, one game, in which your goal was to resurrect the Dark Lord himself, had a warning on the package to keep sensitive types away from its Satanic content. What game was this?

- A. Heretic
- B. Barney's Hide & Seek
- C. Devilish
- D. Tecmo's Deception

### Question 10. In the classic adventure game Snatcher, main character Gillian Seed runs into a lot of interesting folks on his quest to rid the world of Snatchers. Which of the following does he not meet along the way?

- A. A little girl who is actually a bloodthirsty robot
- B. An informant dressed as Santa Claus
- C. A drug-using surfer
- D. Sparkster from the game Rocket Knight Adventures

## XBOX GOES GLOBAL

Some months after unveiling its console here in the States,

Microsoft has unleashed the Xbox worldwide. The system was recently launched in Japan, Europe, and Australia. The Japanese market, in particular, is being seen as an important one for possible future success for the platform. Before the Xbox came out in the US, Microsoft was careful to approach Japanese developers to get them on board with creating titles for the system. This was seen as important due to the sheer amount, as well as quality of software that emanates from the country.



Some early numbers have surfaced from Japan, and although Microsoft itself has yet to release any details, it's safe to say that the launch could have gone better. The Xbox debuted with 250,000 units and sold approximately 123,000 of those. With a dozen games available at launch, about 1.59 titles were sold with each Xbox. That's compared to 2.4 games tied in with each unit in the early days of the system's life here in America.

This new relationship between Microsoft's system and the Japanese was further complicated when defects were reported shortly after launch. Software discs were being scratched by the Xbox – although the company claimed that this didn't affect their performance. Despite early reports, there was no recall of consoles, and the problem was reported in less than one percent of all systems – well within the normal defect parameters for most consumer products.

The Xbox launched in Europe with over 20 titles to its name, but early sales reports on how many consoles shipped were not available at the time of this writing. Microsoft says that it plans to send 1.5 million units to stores by the end of June, thereby bringing the number of total Xboxes shipped worldwide to 6 million. On the software side, the company wants to have more than 60 games available in Europe in the same time frame.



13% of GI readers think Matt throws like a girl

66% of Reiner's emails were from readers asking if they could stop by the office to play Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

100% of Xbox owners are thankful that Nintendo continues to delay Star Fox Adventures

100% of GameCube owners are thankful that Microsoft continues to release games like Azurik and Blood Wake

33% of Justin's day is spent looking in a mirror

## RAYMAN RETURNS, STILL LIMBLESS


## NEW, SMALLER XBOX CONTROLLER

Here's a list of some of the differences between Controller S and the standard unit.

Here's a list of some of the differences between Controller S and the standard unit.

- 
- A black video game controller with a silver cord. The controller features two analog sticks, a directional pad, and a set of five colored buttons (yellow, blue, red, green, and white) arranged in a circular pattern on the right side. The controller is shown from a top-down perspective.

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into a fighting-mad animal, then you're not playing Bloody Roar: Primal Fury – and that's not right.



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- **A Brady Games' Bloody Roar:** Primal Fury strategy guide

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(2) Send an EMAIL with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to: [bloodyroar@gameinformer.com](mailto:bloodyroar@gameinformer.com)

Your name will be placed in a pool of valid entrants for a random drawing to be conducted on June 3, 2002.

[illegible]

► Fresh off of being Kobe Bryant's ball boy, developer Left Field is now getting out from under Nintendo. The company was working on GameCube's 1080° Snowboarding 2, but that has been reassigned within Nintendo - who told us that like any rock band break-up, the split was "amicable."

► Updating March's Baseball breakdown, **Sega's World Series Baseball 2K3** will be an Xbox exclusive this month, and will not come out on Nintendo's GameCube.

► **Command & Conquer: Generals** is the name of the newest EA offering in the RTS series. Slated for the end of the year, this C&C won't offer music factories, but will instead feature a new 3D engine and pit US and China against the Global Liberation Army 20 years in the future.

► **Epic Games and Legend** Entertainment's PC FPS *Unreal II* has undergone a name change to become *Unreal Episode II* (releasing this fall). That's not to be confused with *Unreal Tournament II*, which will now be called *Unreal Tournament 2003* (summer). More changes are in store for *Unreal Episode II* - multiplayer has been removed. Epic feels that those that want this feature can play *UT 2003*. Remember: Don't be confused.

► **Nintendo** owners rejoice! A **Capcom** representative confirmed that the remake of the first *Resident Evil* is scheduled to hit stores in the US on April 30. Get in line now!

► **Microsoft** has announced that it is releasing **Project KX** in the States this fall with the new moniker **Kakuto Cholin**. A smart move, seeing as how the previous title often had people confusing the game's street brawling and dynamic **Advance Fighting System** with the KY brand of "personal" line.

**Ultima** kingpin **Richard Garriott** is hard at work on two high-profile projects that will be joint efforts between his recently formed **Destination Games** and Korean publisher **NCSOFT**. Right now, he's splitting his time between porting the ultra-popular Korean MMORPG **Lineage: The Blood Pledge** to the US; and creating his all-new MMORPG, **Tabula Rasa**, which apparently breaks with Ultima's D&D-inspired universe by incorporating elements of Eastern history, sci-fi, and Buddhist philosophy.

► Two name changes are in store. **Majesco** sales will now be known as **Argon Interactive**, while **Rockstar Games'** development house and **Grand Theft Auto 3** creators **DMA Designs** have been dubbed **Rockstar Studios**.

**Name That Game Answer:**



# GAUNTLET<sup>®</sup> DARK LEGACY™

nice rack, dude!

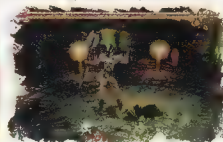
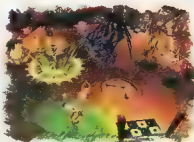


**THE GAME WHERE YOU AND 3 BUDDIES ALL GET TO BE HEROES.  
ONLY THING IS, ONE OF YOU HAS TO BE THE CHICK.**



screenshots from PlayStation<sup>®2</sup> computer entertainment system

Get your friends together for the original, all-4-one, one-4-all, hack-and-slash, free-4-all. Gauntlet Dark Legacy brings all the excitement, fun and camaraderie of this classic to Nintendo GameCube™, PlayStation<sup>®2</sup> computer entertainment system – and now Xbox™ video game system!



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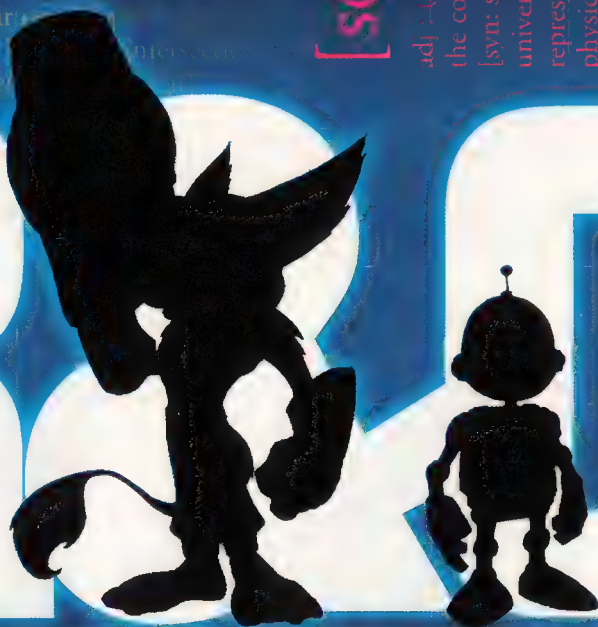
PlayStation<sup>®2</sup>



Blood  
Violence

"the 1920s had a style of their own, abruptly; "The car cut to the intersection [syn: swerve, sheer, curve, veer] at the

# [series]



# TRENDSETTING

## The Evolution of the Modern Day Platformer

One that initiates or popularizes a trend  
**28 GAME INFORMER**  
 property tax" (New York)



# RATCHET & CLANK

**While exciting for consumers,** the 2001

calendar year proved to be incredibly frustrating and overly competitive for game manufacturers. If a product didn't have a significant historical backing, or an innovative feature that really stood out as extraordinary, it was essentially destined to be buried within the overwhelming amount of new software hitting the market. Two shining examples: Grand Theft Auto III offered an enticing and completely original gameplay experience, while Metal Gear Solid 2 sold by namesake alone. On the other hand, a title like Jak and Daxter, which was at the top of its genre, didn't have the name recognition or the unique appeal to truly make it stand out as a must-have property. Upstart franchises are subject to failure – no matter how impressive they may be. In this day and age, the driving force behind the success of games is immediate recognition and the ability to deliver a revolutionary playing experience. With the overabundance of quality titles on the market, there really is no place for complacency.

Following up on the release of Jak and Daxter, Naughty Dog's President Jason Rubin expresses frustration with the current shape of the industry. "Movie people will go watch Meg Ryan fall in love with the actor of the day; break up; cry; get back together; and have a happy ending once a year, every year to the tune of 50 to 100 million dollars in the box office. They never say, 'Wait a minute! That's the same plot with a different city!' They never say, 'It's a madlib movie.' In our industry, the gamer doesn't want to see another Meg Ryan movie. They want to see something new in every game that they play. The consumer has expectations for the movement of the video game industry that outweigh anything that's happening in any other entertainment medium."

Insomniac Games, creator of the critically acclaimed and best-selling Spyro the Dragon series, has run headlong into this dilemma. Despite having assembled one of the most talented teams in recent memory, Mark Cerny, who contributed in the creation of the Crash Bandicoot, Spyro, and Jak and Daxter games, questions, "Is it still possible to make a genre breaker in the year 2002?" Even if this goal is attainable, another hurdle towers like a monolith in front of the Insomniac team. Does the PlayStation 2 market still cater to the action/platform audience? As of now, it doesn't appear so.

One can't overlook the fact that Grand Theft Auto III and Metal Gear Solid 2 went on to sell millions of copies within the blink of an eye. Violence and serious themes are the current trend-setters. The success of these games clearly shows that a significant portion of PlayStation 2 adopters are, in fact, adults. Right now, the majority of gamers are looking for the next experience along these lines. A fuzzy character doesn't even register to them at this point. So, can the action/platform genre reclaim the spotlight? Most definitely.

All it really takes is a groundbreaking effort.

**If the Sypro series** is any indication as to how creative this team can be, conceiving a groundbreaking project shouldn't be a terribly frustrating endeavor. As Insomniac soon found out, however, starting with a clean slate is an exciting proposition, but one filled with infinite possibilities. On a daily basis, the team would meet – on the rooftop of their development studio, of all places – to discuss what they wanted to do next. Hundreds of interesting ideas were thrown around, several of which could have transformed into inventive games in their own right; but the team wasn't in complete agreement until Brian Hastings, a veteran designer at Insomniac, proposed a concept of a character

high-tech gizmos are the norm. Ratchet lives on a backwater planet at the edge of the galaxy. Much like Luke Skywalker, he has always wanted to flee home to explore the cosmos. The similarities with George Lucas' most famous hero are such that we wouldn't be surprised if Insomniac incorporates a panoramic shot of Ratchet with his foot on a rock and his hands at his side, looking longingly at two setting suns.

Working as a mechanic, Ratchet comes to the conclusion that the only way he'll leave this lifeless rock is through the construction of his own spaceship. Although extremely talented and dedicated to his cause, Ratchet knows that his odds are slim,

especially since he doesn't have a robotic ignition system – a component that is extremely hard to obtain. All, as it would seem, is lost.

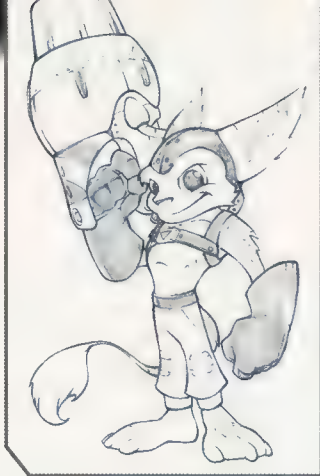
Meanwhile, in another part of the galaxy, an evil race known only as the Blarg have come to wits end with their living arrangements. The Blargarian planet is overpopulated and heavily polluted. All life will perish if action isn't taken immediately. The Blargarian leader has devised a brilliant plan to save his people, but the consequences will be immeasurable. Whether his intentions are just remains to be seen, yet this mysterious being has decided to create his own synthetic

utopia by cutting out pieces of other worlds and joining them together. Naturally, every planet he dissects will be destroyed.

To ensure his plans aren't foiled, he's strategically placed robot factories throughout the galaxy. Working around the clock,

these factories continually spit out heavily armed automatons with the goal of making every planetary race an endangered one; thus reducing the threat of planetary forces resisting the eradication of their world. All is working to plan until one of the war factories malfunctions and spits out a defective robot.

Unarmed, minute, and surprisingly intelligent – the exact opposite of the original design – the robot emerges with a personality all its own. His name is Clank.



No mindless drone, Clank is self-aware and intent on stopping the leader's plan. Clank manages to flee the factory and rockets into space. After a laser-filled escape through the stars, the robotic hopeful is shot down, crash landing on Ratchet's planet. As fortune would have it, Ratchet stumbles across the unconscious machine, tossing Clank on his back, believing some of his parts can be used as scrap.

As Ratchet labors away on his spacecraft, Clank awakens and frantically urges his newfound companion to help him save the galaxy. While a little reluctant, Ratchet agrees; but at this point, he would accept any offer if it resulted in leaving this boring place. Clank's ship is demolished, but it just happens that he has the components needed to finish Ratchet's ship. Out of convenience, the two team up and blast off to combat the cosmic scourge.

This is how the game, which bears the appropriate name Ratchet & Clank, begins. Although fate brought them together, our two protagonists have little in common and are basically using one another to get where they need to go. The conflict

between Ratchet & Clank will play a large role in the game's storyline, which is much more complex than the average action/platform fairytale.

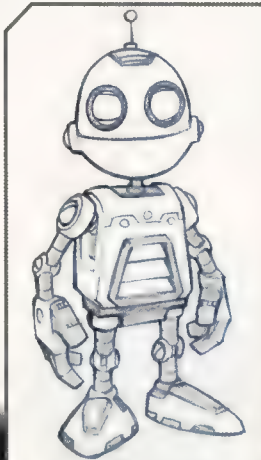
With his robotic accomplice at his side, Ratchet is finally fulfilling his lifelong dream. Little does he realize, though, that Clank is jeopardizing this endeavor. Without warning, the Blarg swoop in and pursue Ratchet's homemade contraption. Armed to the teeth and intent on destruction, the Blarg assault the escaping vessel with laser fire, quickly disposing of it. The remnants of the craft trickle down onto an unknown planet's surface. Miraculously, the two passengers are unharmed...but are stranded once again. Although brimming with lush scenery, this world is incredibly hostile – even more so with the Blarg invading.



traversing space to visit different worlds. This idea intrigued the entire staff, and would allow for the creation of an expansive Star Wars-like universe, where discovery is constant and uncertainty lurks around every corner.

Ted Price, Insomniac's President, comments, "At this point, the team immediately began toying with this concept. We knew what we wanted to do." Even though the design screamed for a character who embodied the essence of Marvin the Martian, Insomniac wanted to create a hero of mascot proportions that reflected the true nature of an action/platform game. As luck would have it, the team knew exactly what they wanted in terms of a hero. Within just a matter of weeks, a fuzzy, attitude-driven mammal named Ratchet was born. His name stems from his love for mechanics and gadgetry. Most action/platform characters, even Mario, have a distinct look, but don't really have an identity. Insomniac wanted to shatter this perception. Thus, a monumental story was penned – one that brings Ratchet into the forefront and expands upon his personality throughout the course of the adventure.

The game takes place in a galaxy very different from ours; a place where robots, spaceships, and







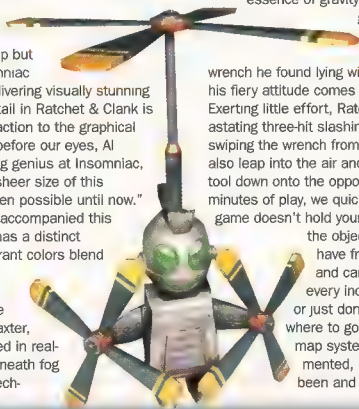
These little critters are called Sand Sharks. True to their name, they crawl beneath the ground with only their fins showing



The Bomb Glove works well against hordes of enemies

**At this point**, players are thrust into the action at hand and we begin to see what kind of gameplay experience Insomniac has in store for us. Right off the bat, you can clearly see this isn't your typical "Easter egg hunt" platformer. There isn't a damsel in distress who has been taken hostage by an evil turtle. Nor will you be required to find a specific number of items to progress. The only concern at this point is survival.

When you take your first steps into this foreign land, you can't help but look on in disbelief. Insomniac has always excelled in delivering visually stunning works, but the level of detail in Ratchet & Clank is staggering. Seeing our reaction to the graphical magnitude that unfolded before our eyes, Al Hastings, the programming genius at Insomniac, humbly interjected, "The sheer size of this project would not have been possible until now." The artistic direction that accompanied this portrait-like environment has a distinct Insomniac feel, where vibrant colors blend in perfect harmony with harsh steels and magnificent constructs. Much like Naughty Dog's Jak and Daxter, the entire world is rendered in real-time and is not hidden beneath fog or shrewd programming tech-



niques. If you see something a mile off in the distance, there's a good possibility you will eventually reach it.

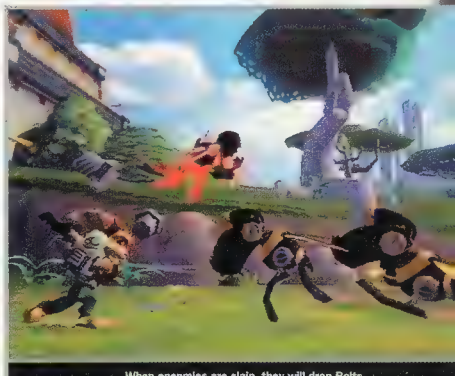
We found ourselves equally impressed with the gameplay mechanics. The general movements are incredibly user-friendly and the controls lend themselves nicely to the complexity of play. When you move, you can almost feel Ratchet making each step. The same theory applies to the jumping mechanics and the essence of gravity. At this point in the

game, the only way Ratchet can defend himself is with a

wrench he found lying within the wreckage. With his fiery attitude comes surprising agility. Exerting little effort, Ratchet can perform a devastating three-hit slashing combo by wildly swiping the wrench from side to side. He can also leap into the air and bring the head of this tool down onto the opposition. After a few minutes of play, we quickly realized that the game doesn't hold your hand and lead you to the objective or exit. You truly have free reign of the region and can quite literally explore every inch of it. If you get lost, or just don't have a clue as to where to go next, a sophisticated map system has been implemented, illustrating where you've been and where you still need to

go. In this case, the duo must work their way to another spaceship, so they can blast off again. You can find this craft fairly easily, but there's a catch.

The game features a complex economic system called Bolts. Whenever you down a foe or smash a box, there's a chance they'll drop a handful of nuts and gears onto the ground. Nuts are worth five Bolts, gears equate to 10.



When enemies are slain, they will drop Bolts (the currency in the game) for you to collect



Through morphing levels of detail techniques, every object within the environments is rendered on the fly in real-time



Ratchet calls upon a devastating wrench attack combo to disable the Blarg's robotic mercenaries



A lot of the strategy in the game centers around the ability to successfully manage weapon ranges



The default wrench attack comes equipped with a number of secondary functions. You can even hurl it like a boomerang



Since most of the civilizations are advanced, you'll frequently infiltrate enemy compounds



Unlike most platforming games, Ratchet & Clank isn't an Easter egg hunt, but an expansive adventure without boundaries

When you blast off and land on the second planet, you'll run into a vendor who is selling weapons. While the gameplay mechanics are incredibly engrossing as is, the wrench is just the default attack in the game. Most of the action is set around the weapons and gadgets that you'll acquire. Blowing away our expectations, Ted Price announced that, "Ratchet can acquire over 35 different weapons and gadgets. That's something you don't normally see in a character action game." Although excited to show us all of the

destructive forces and Inspector Gadget-like gizmos in the game, Insomniac held back and gave us a sample of things to come. All of the weapons are split into four groups: short, medium, and long ranges, and special ability. As was the case in the Spyro games, players will have a greater success rate with managing their abilities and figuring out what an enemy's weak spot is. All the weapons can be accessed on the fly via an item ring that you can bring up. With just one click of a button, you can quickly switch between attacks. For enemies with short-range attacks, you may want to use the Bomb Glove – which comes equipped with a handy targeting system allowing incredible accuracy when tossing the explosives. When swarms of enemies attack, laying on the heat with the Pyroclator (flame thrower) will cook anything that comes your way. If you don't want to get within the line of sight of a specific foe, you can launch a self-guided missile from the other side of the planet. This aspect really brings about a unique feel and incredible gameplay depth. The more Bolts you acquire, the more ammo and weapons you'll be able to obtain.

As for gadgets, Ratchet will eventually be covered from head to toe with mechanical devices. The only accoutrement shown to us was something called the Swingshot. Fondly recalling memories of Bionic Commando, Ratchet propels a line that attaches to floating orbs. Again, with the simplest of control, he can then pull himself up to the orb, or swing like Tarzan to another ledge. These challenges progress in difficulty, but allow gamers to reach gameplay Zen as they blindly jump, grapple, and swing themselves across a level.

"The weapons allow us to create this huge emphasis on action. It's all about the weapons and blowing stuff up," Ted Price explains. "A lot of the fun in the game is derived from finding or buying big-ass weapons and blowing the crap out of enemies."

As for the adversaries that roam the planets, extraordinary effort went into creating diverse AI and behaviors for each specific enemy type. Brian Algeier, Insomniac's

Design Director and visionary behind several of the foes in the game, specifically broke this down: "The enemies will respond differently to particular weapons. There's one weapon in specific that will even change the enemy behavior. The gameplay is king. We really tried to incorporate gameplay into the art designs and enemy behaviors." An example of this is that some enemies will flee when you pull out a specific firearm. They just turn tail and head for the hills.

Remember Clank, that little robot on Ratchet's back? As the game progresses, Clank will actually transform into several useful devices. A helicopter will shoot out of his head, allowing you to jump higher and glide. His feet will even form into rockets, allowing you to soar like never before. Touching on the story again, the plot is an integral part of this game. As we said before, Ratchet and Clank are associated

simply because they both needed something from one another. This really won't be the case later in the game. The personalities of both characters will change dramatically, and tensions will flare up between the comrades. Insomniac even went so far as to say they will be split up, and yes, Clank will become an individual playable character with his own unique abilities and move sets. Ted Price adds, "Hopefully, players will think of them as real characters and not just cardboard cutouts that we usually see in character action games."

From the character progression, to the graphical details, to the incredibly complex gameplay, you can really see what kind of game Insomniac is trying to create – a nonlinear experience that incorporates the best elements of action/platform, adventure, and RPG games. You're not stuck on an island or just one world. You're continually roaming the galaxy and exploring new planets. As you navigate the alien cities and terrain, you'll need to keep your eyes peeled for friendly locals, stranded visitors, and little robots

**"We want gamers to be weak at the knees by how much they've acquired and how many options they have to progressing through the game."**

**Mark Cerny**





The animations are just as fluid, if not more so, than the vivid movements in Naughty Dog's Jak and Daxter



If you look closely, you'll see a squadron of planes flying by. Sequences like these can occur at any second and may be scripted or looping

called Infobots. Ted Price explains, "The Infobots allow you to go from planet to planet because they give you planetary coordinates. They also tell a story. Each little one is kind of a vignette. For example, one is an advertisement for a new gadget. Another is a distress call from guys who have crash-landed on the planet. Another one might be a newscast that you hear about some event going on another planet.

"They really are varied, and are a nice little reward for players. They tie into the macro story as well. This macro story is the most complex that we've ever attempted as a team. It's supported by the Infobots. It's supported by the cinematics in the levels and in-between the levels. Ratchet and Clank do talk – both of them. They are both heavily involved in most of the scenes. They are fully lip-synched and fully animated every time."

The worlds themselves are very lifelike as well, and are loaded to the hilt with looping and scripted sequences. On one such planet, a war is erupting and planes can be seen flying overhead. The planes are looping every few

minutes; however, when players reach a specific portion in the level, a scripted event takes place showing a plane swooping in and bombing a bridge. You never really know what is going to happen in this game.

Has Insomniac Games created a groundbreaking product that re-animates the tired old action/platform genre? In terms of the technology used, scope of gameplay, and integral story-telling – yes. Those of the Game Informer staff who were lucky enough to see and play the game were completely blown away by the size, depth, and dedication that went into this project. Although a bold statement, Ratchet & Clank could very well become the mascot type of game the PlayStation 2 so direly needs. It could also make Nintendo and Rareware take a good, hard look at the games they consider to be the cream of the platforming crop.

Sony Computer Entertainment hasn't finalized an exact release date for this exciting project, but it will reach retail shelves for the heated battle that will ensue this holiday season.

**"We don't want homogeneity. We want visual variety. We want players to get excited about going to the new planets."**



**Ted Price**



Much like Halo, the enemy AI is extremely sophisticated and each enemy type will deal with situations differently



The PX6 Devastator will make quick work of any foe



# LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER

*the angel of darkness*

## EIDOS' FALLEN ANGEL

“Our vision is to take the player somewhere dark, a place they might not necessarily wish to go. It will be a new experience for people who have played Tomb Raider in the past.”

**ADRIAN SMITH**  
CORE DESIGNS

**Lara's last adventures,** Tomb Raider: Chronicles, were uninspired, posthumous tales told on the PlayStation. Now, with a new PlayStation 2 exclusive deal in hand, not to mention the box-office receipts of Angelina Jolie in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* in the bank, Eidos is ready to bring the heroine back to life. The company recently pulled the curtain back on Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness, and we got a glimpse of a Lara that has been clearly changed by her last brush with death. These personal struggles are not the greatest of her challenges, however. Being the sixth incarnation of the series, this title (due out in winter) is going to have to evolve beyond the familiar Tomb Raider formula to renew gamers' interest in the franchise. Enter: The Angel of Darkness.



Some feared that this new Tomb Raider's Lara would be changed to look like actress Angelina Jolie from the movie. Not so. Meet the new Lara Croft: Jill De Jong. She's a 20-year old model from Holland who stands in at six feet tall. Dark angel, Dutch treat!

“Our vision is to take the player somewhere dark, a place they might not necessarily wish to go,” says Adrian Smith, Operations Director of developer Core Designs. “But [it's] a place they will have to venture if they are to bring Lara back.” After some years living in the North of Africa, Lara is far from the carefree adventurer we once knew her as. She will not speak about her time there – not even to close friends and associates. All we know is that it was spent in the company of some North African tribe. Whatever the details, Lara's time with them has hardened her into an almost completely different person. She is less tolerant, and Eidos and Core hope that this will manifest itself both in the game's mood and gameplay. Says Smith: “Lara will have some tough moral choices to make. It's no longer a clear-cut case of good versus evil – this is a more complex tale, which will ask more complex questions of the player.”

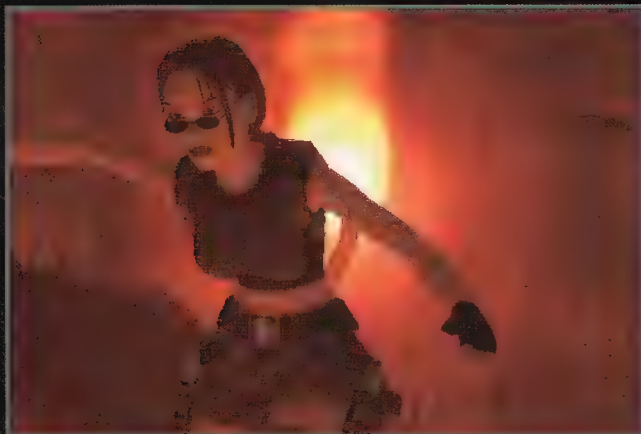
The game commences with Lara being summoned to Paris by her former mentor Von Croy. Upon her arrival, Lara is shocked to discover him dead. To make matters worse, she finds herself implicated in his murder. Von Croy had been asked by a man named Eckhardt to track down one of five pieces of 14th century artwork known as the Obscura Paintings. This is her only clue to unraveling the murder. In following this trail, she meets another adventurer named Kurtis Trent, who is after Eckhardt himself. In a surprise turn, Kurtis is also a playable character. What follows is a tale laden with dark alchemy, savagery, Nazis, hearts ripped out of bodies, and other unimaginable acts – all part of an epic story that spans several centuries.



To help this already alluring story come alive, Core Designs has created an all-new game engine from the ground up. Whereas previous character models of Lara may have numbered around 500 polygons, *The Angel of Darkness* will now be comprised of more than 5,000. Core says that it is using a 36-person team for this title, and currently has members working ahead on the three installments of the story that have already been written exclusively for the PlayStation 2. It plans to get the most out of the technology of the PS2 – and any future consoles, by maintaining an ambitious development schedule in which games will be started at least two years before they are forecasted to ship. Core expects to release one *Tomb Raider* a year from here on out.

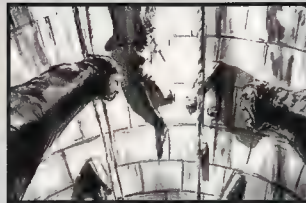
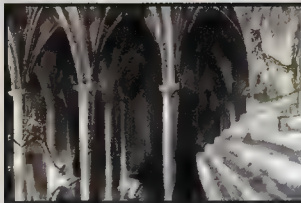
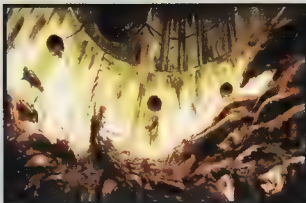


One of Lara's new tricks is the ability to use stealth moves and grapples to surprise and accost guards in a manner similar to *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*. That's not a hug.



Building on her well-known (and sometimes frustrating) platforming exploits, the new *Tomb Raider*'s gameplay will take a page out of *Metal Gear Solid 2*'s book. Stealth features will allow our heroine to creep up and surprise foes similar to Snake. What lies beyond this may be the key to the game. Although the series has been praised for its puzzles, it has also been criticized for its stiff, almost mathematical approach to the games' platforming and Lara's moves. Without hands-on gameplay to guide us, we can only hope that with an increase in polygons comes a similar attention to incorporating the new stealth moves in a way that makes Lara a more smooth, and therefore living, character. Speaking to this larger point of growth, Adrian Smith says that Core has no fear in this department. "[*Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness*] will be a new experience for people who have played *Tomb Raider* in the past."

Those that don't evolve die; and something tells us that this new Lara will have more than enough skills to stave off death – and not for the first or last time.



Gamers will instantly sense the mood of *Angel of Darkness*' environments. Gone are the rocks of archaeological digs, and in is a menacing approach more in line with the likes of *Soul Reaver*





# RYGAR

## TECMO'S HERO FOR THE AGES

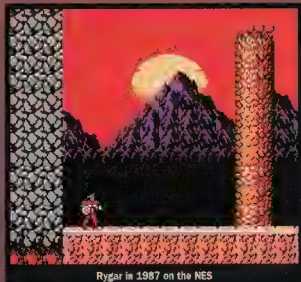
**A world in chaos.** A rising evil. A land without a hero. While this scenario is one that has been told through an endless number of video games, it still inspires us and speaks to one of the reasons why we play vids in the first place. In the world of our imagination, we are in control, and success is up to us. There is no room for failure. This personal investment, this connection, is a priceless asset for any video game. It cannot be faked, no matter how good the graphics are, or whatever bells and whistles are thrown in your face. Of course, gamering a player's devotion and elevating this familiar storyline requires gameplay that anchors the title and sets it apart from the rest.

In 1987, Tecmo released Rygar for the NES. At the time, side-scrolling action titles were certainly nothing new, but Rygar did a lot with the familiar "hero saves world" premise. Instrumental in the game's ability to present a compelling gameplay experi-

ence and distinguish itself was Rygar's trusty Diskarmor. This multifaceted device not only presented a weapon, it also opened up vertical aspects of the levels – a break from the standard side-scrolling of the day. Against the backdrop of a dying sun, players raced across the varied terrain of Argool, spurred by the quest to defeat Ligor and their own sense of mortality. Gamers were captivated by Rygar and his Diskarmor back then, and they still are today. It is often described as one of the "greatest games you've never heard of."

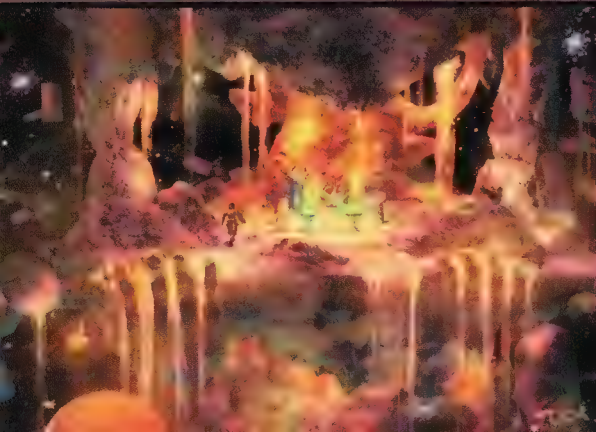
Fast forward to the year 2002, and Tecmo is bringing Rygar back for another epic quest, this time on the PlayStation 2. The landscape of video games may have changed since 1987, with innovative and more free-roaming titles like *Grand Theft Auto III* being all the rage. Still, players are always looking for a hero to rise up and take them on a good, honest, ass-kicking adven-

ture. Tecmo's preparing a new incarnation of Rygar to fulfill this mission, calling on both familiar and wonderfully new elements to evoke more than just some classic memories of an old title. As Executive Producer Satoshi Kanematsu puts it: "Our lofty dream is to cause [a] revolution in the world of entertainment with Rygar."



Rygar in 1987 on the NES

■ PLATFORM PLAYSTATION 2 ■ STYLE 1 PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER TECMO ■ DEVELOPER TECMO ■ RELEASE FALL







"Let's go grab some booty and give it a good old Kick!"

Similar to the NES Rygar, this new edition will feature a story that spurs you onto heroic heights without ever slowing down the action-packed doing of the deed. The game starts with the Island of Argus being plunged into a fiery chaos from which an evil queen and her minions have sprung. If this wasn't enough of a call to arms, you soon find out that not only has your village been burned to the ground, but the Princess is missing, too. This is a familiar predicament, but one that Tecmo's development team has no fear of overcoming.

"[The] new Rygar is not just a remake of the old one. It's a completely new game, but I'll assure you that the fans of the old Rygar will never be disappointed. If you enjoyed the old Rygar, you will fall in love, head over heels with the new Rygar in a way that is beyond anyone's imagination." That's a pretty high goal coming from Kanematsu. Achieving it will require a delicate balancing act between growing the game from its origins to attract new converts, while still containing those essential elements that will make it a familiar experience to appease old fans. Of course, what else can Rygar rely on in a tight situation like this, other than his trusty Diskarmor?

The Diskarmor is more than just a link to the franchise's past or a cool novelty weapon. It is the key to bringing the game vividly into the world of 3D. It also fulfills the team's desire to stick to the title's arcade/action roots. Its seemingly limitless movements create a style of combat where grace is equaled only by the capacity for destruction. The instrument's dynamic uses give the game a powerful gameplay asset and distinguishing identity. Kanematsu agrees. "The most important thing in this game is the Diskarmor, that was also featured in the NES version. However, the Diskarmor will no longer be just a weapon it will also become an essential survival tool and divine instrument. The name 'Diskarmor' is a compound word 'disk + armor' and it

**"I'll go as far as saying that the game of Rygar is the Diskarmor."**

**SATOSHI KANEMATSU**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



also means 'dis + karma.' Diskarmor is [an] absolutely essential part of this game. I'll go as far as saying that the game of Rygar is the Diskarmor."

Tecmo has expanded the uses of the old weapon to an unbelievable degree. As an offensive tool alone, it excels. The Diskarmor extends out like a deadly yo-yo with a spiked mace at its end. It can also be shot out in quick, successive strikes to form a combo sequence in which Rygar throws it about like a pair of nunchucks. Going one better, Tecmo has given players even more range with the weapon by letting you control its 360° arc after it's been fully extended. For instance, in one area we played, advancing foes surrounded Rygar. The only effective way out of this tight situation was to send the Diskarmor out and sweep it back and forth in front of him; slicing all in its path. If this isn't enough, you can also perform the "Snap Attack," which uses the weapon as a sort of whip. This allows you to grab hold of certain enemies in front of you and toss them about – even into other opponents. And like any late-night, slicer-and-dicer TV commercial would tell you – there's more. During a recent hands-on session with the game, we sat and watched as Rygar

Rygar's new Diskarmor is uncoiled and swung about in full 3D





performed sequence after sequence of battle moves.

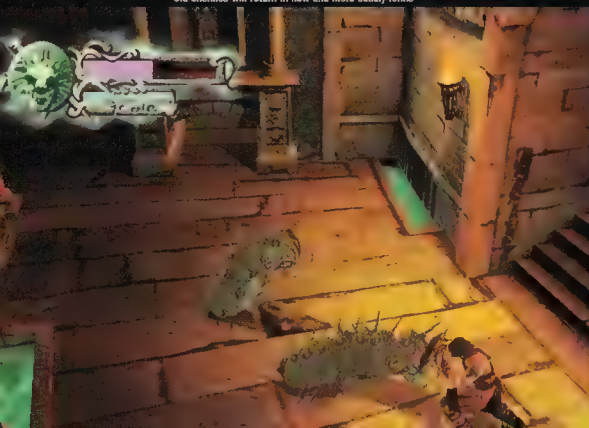
This freedom of movement with the Diskarmor is light years ahead of its old incarnation, and makes great use of the extra dimension at this new Rygar's fingertips. To this end, Tecmo made sure not to do anything that would restrict the tools' movement. Therefore, a lock-on system was not implemented. Kanematsu describes this decision as a product of the Diskarmor's "miraculous power" as a "divine instrument." He comments, "I'm confident that the gamers will love the 3D environment of this game where they can freely move the Diskarmor 360 degrees."

Also receiving a significant upgrade this time around is Rygar's host of spells. Although Tecmo didn't want to leak too many secrets on this front, it seems that these will be elemental in nature and emanate from the Diskarmor. Exactly how these will be acquired is not yet known; however, we have already seen some blistering fire attacks from the weapon. More impressive yet, monster summons will be yet another ally you can call upon. Similar to the enemy Titans (bosses), these will be quite large. One we saw was at least three times the size of Rygar himself. Summons' attacks won't be controlled by the character as in Final Fantasy X, but will instead provide quick strikes in your times of need.

Even without the Diskarmor, Rygar is a formidable warrior. Shoulder charges, slides, and a jumping attack – reminiscent of a similar move in the old title – will round out your arsenal. While Tecmo was very careful to tell us it doesn't see the game in an action/platform mold like a Jak and Daxter – as it doesn't want to break up the combat too much – it will require some nimble maneuvering and puzzle solving. As in the first Rygar, the Diskarmor will be used as a grappling hook to take you to different locations. Whatever your action, the game moves incredibly smooth, always keeping up with you no matter what you decide to do.

"If you enjoyed the old Rygar, you will fall in love, head over heels with the new Rygar in a way that is beyond anyone's imagination."

Old enemies will return in new and more deadly forms.



Environments will often contain objects that'll allow you to hoist yourself up if need be.







Rygar features levels that will be distinctly varied in nature – none more than Hades itself

The most obvious, and easiest evolution from the days of the NES is in the visual realm. This is of importance, not only because of the emphasis these days on having the most up-to-date graphics, but because fans of old games like Rygar are often fixated on the tried-and-true 2D gameplay of the classics. Although not truly bringing our hero into full 3D – the game utilizes prerendered backgrounds littered with 3D objects – the new Rygar environments only increase the solid action base that old-school players will definitely appreciate.

For starters, this transformation has allowed a more pronounced Greco-Roman theme to come out, apart from the few enemy and location names in the original. The Minotaur's lair, an enormous coliseum, Medusa-esque monsters, deadly Centaurs, and much more all help to flesh out Rygar's world with a sweeping, epic backdrop. In fact, Greece was "instrumental" in bringing about this new take on the game in the first place. Kanematsu told us, "I was completely hooked on the arcade version of the original Rygar. Around that time, I went on a soul-searching trip to Europe with only my favorite guitar. During that trip I saw the Parthenon in Greece during a beautiful sunset, and told myself then that some day I have to make a sequel for Rygar." His original inspiration led him to even include a former archeologist on the Rygar team who had spent time in both Greece and Rome.

Locations not only include Earthbound places such as a city in the sky, an aqua palace, and the coliseum; but also other-worldly sites such as the astral plane, Elysium (with its Mount Olympus influence), and even Hades. This latter level is complete with the river Styx and its keeper Charon –



At the end of this level, you'll have traveled all the way down from the coliseum's stands for the final confrontation

among even bigger and more threatening inhabitants.

This Greco-Roman theme looms much larger than life throughout the game's seven worlds. In the coliseum, for example, you'll have to work your way down through its halls before earning an audience with the level's boss in the center arena. This all-encompassing utilization of the worlds opens up your experience, similar to how the first Rygar expanded its areas vertically. The game further capitalizes on its new surroundings by offering a plethora of objects to interact with. Kanematsu cuts right to the chase: "One of the main concepts of Rygar is 'Ultimate destruction.' By placing all kinds of objects in the environment that the players can destroy, we intend to provide the ultimate feeling of the ecstasy of destroying things. [An] interactive element in the game is very important for me." And, of course, what you don't smash to pieces, you'll want to throw your Diskarmor around in order to hoist yourself up to other areas.

Many of the environment shots you see on these pages aren't just concept art. Game Informer has gotten a good look at the locations that are going to be used, and we

**"We intend to provide the ultimate feeling of the ecstasy of destroying things."**





could definitely see the same stylistic approach taken to the actual in-game levels. Apart from giving the game a distinctive look, it helps blend in the interactive objects with their prerendered backgrounds. "You should be happy to know that what you saw was just a tip of an iceberg. The final background will be much greater than anything you've seen," says Kanematsu. "The real challenge is how to go beyond the polygons and effectively utilize the camera work, lighting, and shadow effects to make players want to see more, know more, and play more."

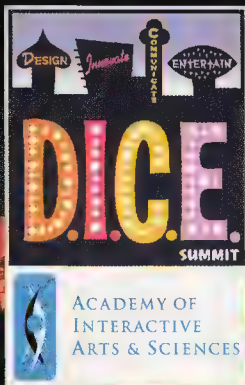
It's only fitting that—given Rygar's impressive environments, the Titans, or bosses, are large enough to do them justice. Imagine being towered over by a giant Earth Golem, Hydra, Hecatomb, or Minotaur. Think of Luke Skywalker fighting the rancor in *Return of the Jedi*, and you're starting to get the idea of just how physically stacked the odds are against you. Unlike an old-school, face-to-face boss confrontation, Rygar's showdowns will allow you to run under these giants' legs as you vie for the best striking position. Some, such as the Evil Queen, will even have minions crawling all over their master. All in all, the game features more than 70 different enemies. The classic rolling attack of the crustacean Rolpher from the original will be just one of the old foes to make an updated appearance.

"Since sunset is like a symbol for Rygar, I'll be paying a lot of attention on how we portray the sun in the advanced 3D environment. [It] will be very impressionable as in the original Rygar," says Kanematsu. The sun will remind gamers of the classic NES game that they loved back in the day. It is also a symbol of man's struggle against death. What is further becoming clear is that Tecmo is not only resurrecting an old title to new glory, but is doing so by beating the odds through its presentation of a familiar tale in a new, inventive, and exciting way.



Vertical challenges will add some platforming tasks to compliment Rygar's non-stop action





Hard Rock photo by Vic Donato www.aboutdice.com

# THE BEST OF THE BEST:

**A**s gaming continues to grow both commercially and creatively, the job of game designer has changed. What was once a trade dependent solely on programming skill has become an artistic role that requires professionals who can address the public's need for products that blend the oftentimes conflicting needs of art direction, graphical fireworks, dramatic

storytelling, and complex gameplay. In the modern era, a game designer's job is more similar to that of a major motion film director's than it is to the pioneering programmers' of the early 1980s.

If game design is truly becoming an art form, then it's high time that it should be treated as such. With this in mind, the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences recently held the inaugural DICE (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) Summit at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. Unlike the annual E3 Expo, which is centered primarily around commerce, or the Game

Developer's Conference, which has become more of an industry job fair than a seminar; DICE was started with the intention of bringing the leading lights of the game industry together to discuss their development philosophies. The guest list was exclusive; only 300 top professionals were invited to attend.

Throughout the two days of the conference, some of the most respected experts in video games gave keynote addresses or participated in round table discussions on topics ranging from "Is Corporate Creativity an Oxymoron?" to "Attack of the Killer

Sequels." Each address was followed by a freewheeling Question and Answer period, in which the audience asked probing, thoughtful questions with often fascinating results.

Of course, DICE wasn't all about intellectual debate, as the event also coincided with the Fifth Annual Interactive Achievement Awards, which were held on the evening of February 28th at the Hard Rock. Hosted by Patton Oswalt, who plays one of the...other guys on television's *The King of Queens*, the awards were a rowdy event, peppered with numerous off-script







## GAMING'S TOP DESIGNERS DISCUSS THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY AT DICE

interjections and a bravura performance by New York turntable assassins, the X-cutioners. The big winners of the night were Halo, which won the coveted Game of the Year award and Best Console Action/Adventure, Return to Castle Wolfenstein (PC Action/Adventure, PC Online Play), Grand Theft Auto III (Best Game Design, Gameplay Engineering), and crowd-favorite ICO (Art Direction, Best Character or Story Development). A special highlight of the night game when a very gracious Will Wright (The Sims, SimCity) came onstage to accept his Lifetime Achievement

Award from last year's Hall of Fame inductee, John Carmack (Doom).

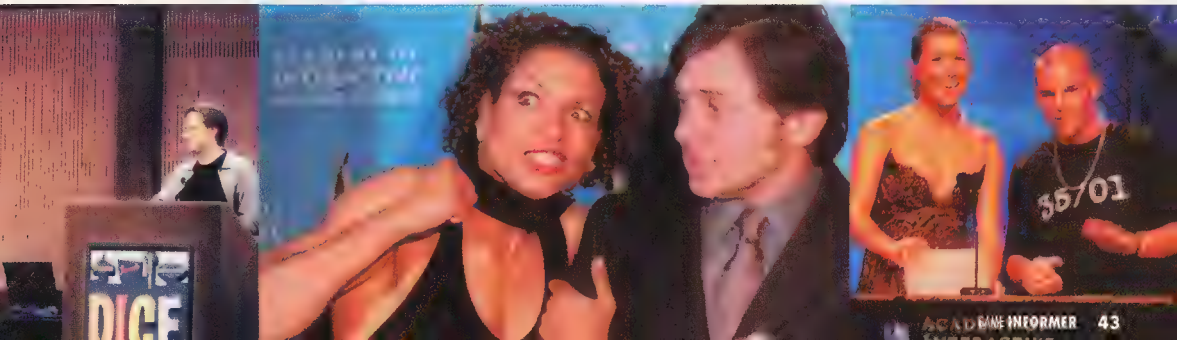
Aside from a few flubbed lines, some spilled drinks, and a painfully unfunny warm-up comedian; the show went off without a hitch, with production values that rival any of the other major awards shows. The only area in which video games still obviously trail the Oscars is in terms of star power. With nary a Pitt, Roberts, or J.Lo in sight, the spotlight fell on such "celebrity" presenters as Natalie Raitano (the short, spunky one from V.I.P.), Dean Haglin (from the X-Files; the Lone Gunman with long

blonde hair), and seemingly-stoned motocross champion Mike Cinqmars (who?). However, given that games have always been the place where the geeks rule the roost, maybe it's a good thing that there weren't too many pretty people around to spoil it for the rest of us.

During the course of the DICE Summit, Game Informer was on hand to interview several of the video game prophets that were there to give their version of the gaming gospel. For a portion of our readers, some of these names, like Richard Garriott or Will Wright, might be unfamiliar; but

whether you play PC games or not, their influence is felt throughout the industry, and is important to the games that you play every day.

Read on as we go one-on-one with the men who have created some of the greatest games ever made. Whether we're talking to bona fide legends like Sid Meier or Shigeru Miyamoto, or rising young guns like American McGee or Cliff Bleszinski, each of these interviews offers up a unique, intelligent view on where video games have been, and where we're headed in the future.



# JASON RUBIN



Jason Rubin is the co-founder of Naughty Dog studios, a company that he started with partner Andy Gavin in the late 1980s. Coming out as self-proclaimed "garage developers," Naughty Dog graduated from making modest games like *Ski Crazed* (Apple II, 1986), and *Way of the Warrior* (3DO, 1994) to being the architects of the *Crash Bandicoot* series for Sony and Universal Interactive. A massive success, the *Crash* series was the best-selling franchise of the PlayStation era. Not content to simply maintain the status quo, Naughty Dog abandoned the *Crash* franchise after *Crash Team Racing* (PS-X, 1999), and blazed into the world of PlayStation 2 development with a brand new property, *Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy*, which was released to universal acclaim last year.

**W**hat would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?

What makes games work is making that smooth interface between the player and the game. My job at Naughty Dog is sit down and say, "This control sucks. I will not play this game with this control." I say that all the time. The features are in it. The balance is there. The control is solid. Yet, the response sucks. I just have this very low tolerance for bad gameplay and bad physical feel. [Our team] does brilliant design work, but I think that my addition, personally, is that I go in and I make *Jak* and *Daxter* so natural feeling in your hands that all of these moves really work and feel good. You don't feel confused or disjointed from the character. I think that [with] most other character-based action games, I sit down and play them and I get frustrated by the control, even in some of the bigger sellers. I think Miyamoto's games always work, too. He has that knack for making the control work, and I think that is the key in my genre – and most genres – to making a game good.

**In the time that you've been in the industry, what do you think are the biggest changes you've seen? How has this affected your job?**

The age demographic that we're targeting changed from kids to an audience that's very broad. It's not that Sony can sell to a 55-year-old today, but when I'm 55 I'll still be playing games. At that point, it will be an entertainment medium for mass audiences. Some game company, maybe called Elder Soft, will make games that target the 45 to 60-year-old gamer. Don't kid yourself; it will happen. Just like there are those Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau movies which [used to] come out every year. The same thing will happen with games. There will be games targeted at that audience, and when that happens, Sony will be responsible for that. Sony took the game from kid to mass

market. They absolutely did that, and that has been a huge change; because, all of a sudden, games are not toys, games are entertainment.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

A little bit more regularity of quality titles...hopefully. If you walk into a store and pick a game off of a shelf, you can still get screwed. I would like to see the industry – this requires corporations to change as well – get a little bit more mature about what they are releasing. The amount of crap that gets released is just painful. Somehow the movie industry, which releases its share of crap, does a better job of alerting the public to what truly is crap. Bad movies come out and you know [they're bad]. You never go see them. We're more aware of it. Yet, bad games continually surprise people.

Actually, magazines have a little bit of responsibility in this. You guys tend to hype everything. Sometimes you know when you see it, and you know who's making it – it is going to suck. It's okay to say that. It's okay to say that this thing has to prove itself, because we're suspicious. Sure, it looks kind of interesting in the five screenshots they've shown us, even though they probably aren't even real gameplay. It's okay to say, "We're not sure." We need to have some proof because gamers are getting screwed left and right and I don't like that.

**What innovations are you work-**

**ing on or do you visualize will bring games beyond what we've already seen?**

I think the biggest change in the future of games is going to be online. That is radically going to change games. [Right now] we are heading more towards just making a movie with a couple of interactive parts. Online will free us of that and make us even more unique. With multiple players out there, it's completely unpredictable and it will tear us away from that pre-scripted movie stuff and back to where our real strength is – which is interactivity.



**"How would you like to meet your future wife because she kicked your ass in some racing game?"**

Once we go online, you start getting into social gaming, and it may be that more than half of the game is just walking around and talking to other characters that actually exist. At that point, the game is 50 percent game and 50 percent chat room. That's a very different kind of game, but no less valid as a game. We're on a planet that is quite large and quite dangerous in some places, and this gives you the ability to be human and interact without being outside of your home. That's a very powerful allure. If you look at the number of people [online] now, it's amazing. I read a statistic that 60 percent of men believe that it is perfectly viable to meet a woman on the Internet. You're looking at a new form of dating. Marriage coming from video games...that's going to be huge. How would you like to meet your future wife because she kicked your ass in some racing game? Some of that needs to be captured in the game industry. It would make us so much stronger. It's revolutionary and nobody even knows that this stuff is happening.



# LORNE LANNING

**If you had to come up with a simple mantra for your own game design, what would it be? What distinguishes your games from other designers?**

In the past, we've had a number of sound bites that went back to the original business plan. One was that we build games for adults that kids are going to love. It wasn't that simple. I envy the sports game developers because you have a finite point you can hit. As soon as it reaches the point where it looks like what I watch on Monday Night Football, that's it. For us, part of the mantra is we're different. It's about creativity. We're trying to bring the experience of film into the experience of interactivity. I think that the game that did that the most successfully in history is ICO on the PlayStation 2. That was a filmmaker's game. The hardcore gamers kind of missed a lot of the beauty that was in that experience. In the movie business, there are a thousand different possibilities of types of films that can exist. Yet, in our industry we're still pretty narrow in terms of genres.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

Standardization of hardware, because I'd like to be able to know that we're designing games the way that you can design a movie, where – if it's a hit – it has the possibility to get into a 100 million homes. Today, I think that Myst is still the greatest selling game of all time at 10 million units. If we had 100 million potential buyers, then you could change the way you think about building games and you could change the way you think about financing games. That would change a lot of the problems that we have. Today, we have exorbitant prices, 10 million-dollar games are commonplace, but we're still coming out for the Xbox and it releases with 250,000 units in Japan. You're dealing with that. You've got to segment your budget. We'd like to spend more, but we can't. We'd like to take more time, but it has to come out now. It's still a tight market; there are a lot of failures compared to the winners. So, if there

were one thing that I could change, it would be a standardized video game machine in every home. What would be fabulous about that is that then you would start seeing the "Rap Game." Stuff white people tend to think that that's one genre of music. Connoisseurs know that there are a hundred genres of rap. Because everyone listens to music, there's a niche for the guy that can only sell 10,000 albums. If you were in the video game industry, that doesn't stand a chance. So, I look forward to that day. I think that that is possible in the next five to ten years.

**Video games have been around for nearly 30 years. Have we reached the point where we are just endlessly refining the same genres? Are there any completely new games left to be explored?**

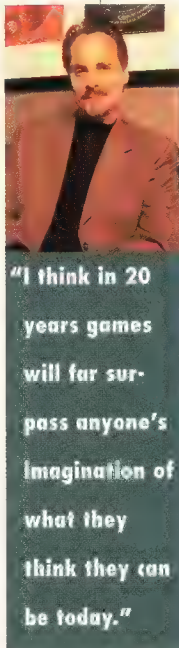
I think in 20 years, games will far surpass anyone's imagination of what they think they can be today. I have no doubt about it; I'm 100% convinced. As we look towards 20 years from now, we're looking at three more generations of hardware that we haven't seen yet. The computing power is going to go up so much, the image quality is going to be like film. The graphics quality opens up more of a mass-market opportunity. Five years from now, I think the common person is going to believe that video games are more intriguing and more interesting than motion pictures. You're going to find very few people that even foresee that today. In 10 years from now, no one will ask people, "Do you play games?" Eighty years ago, people used to

ask, "Do you watch films?" No one asks anyone that today; you just know that they do. Games will come to the same place. Why? Because we're going to find ways of capturing all the entertainment value that we see in other forms of mediums that we take for granted and assume we all watch. When that starts to happen, we're in a different league.

**What advice would you give a reader of our magazine that wants to do what you do? What skills and education would you say are vital to enter the world of game development?**

The most important thing is work ethic. You have to work hard. Learn now. I don't even think it's that important what you study; maybe you're going to be an artist; maybe you're going to be a writer; maybe you're going to be a programmer. Don't think you're going to go anywhere in this industry if you don't think that 10 hours is a short day. If you think you're going to get a nine-to-five job and make great games, you're completely in *la-la* land. This is about hard work. A big issue for all industries in this country today is that these

kids are coming out of school and they want to make \$100,000 a year and they don't want to work. They think they're worth it. It's like, "No, sorry. It's not that way." There's no one that you admire, that built things that you like – be that films or games – that did it on a nine-to-five schedule. You're going to work very hard to create these experiences for people. It's not going to be easy, so face it now. The sooner you swallow that pill, the more successful you'll be.



**"I think in 20 years games will far surpass anyone's imagination of what they think they can be today."**

Lorne Lanning is President and Creative Director of Oddworld Inhabitants, a company he co-founded with Sherry McKenna in 1994. The company has become well-known in the gaming community for its unique visual style and innovative gameplay formula, showcased in the PlayStation hits *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*, *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*, and the recent Xbox launch title *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee*. Prior to his career in gaming, Lorne worked on a number of motion pictures as both Creative Director and Visual EFX Supervisor at Rhythm & Hues Studios in Hollywood. At this year's Interactive Achievement Awards, Munch's Oddysee won the award for Outstanding Achievement in Animation.



# RICHARD GARRIOTT



Also known as Lord British, Richard Garriott has made Austin, Texas an unlikely mecca for role-playing fanatics the world over. His long-running *Ultima* series is one of the most respected (and best-selling) RPG franchises in history, spawning countless sequels since its debut in 1980. Garriott's most famous contribution to the gaming world came in 1997, when he released *Ultima Online*, the world's first massively multiplayer online role-playing game. Wildly popular, *Ultima Online* effectively created the formula that would go on to be used by such games as *EverQuest* and *Asheron's Call*. Now the head of NCSoft Austin, Garriott is working on bringing the Korean online RPG *Lineage* to the States, as well as an upcoming original online game entitled *Tabula Rasa*.

**W**hat would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?

Truly great games are very hard to do. I really think it takes somebody being bold enough to step out on the edge and do something without regard to other people understanding what it is or what it's about or whether it will really sell. I like to believe that I had a little piece of inspiration back in the time of *Ultima IV*. I changed from the first three *Ultimas*, which were just monster hunting games, then starting with *Ultima IV* they became these ethical parables that took *Ultimas* from being an okay game, to being a number one selling game. Or, you know, I would have never predicted *Doom*. There had been action/shooter games previously; it was a dead genre and no one was building games in it. Then, suddenly, the id guys say, "You know what? No one's been building games in it for a long time, and technology's advanced now to where we could really do a kick ass first-person shooter." They just went out and did it. Or *Myst*, the guys said, "You know what, we've got these great rendering tools to make these beautiful pictures now. Why don't we make a little simple game inside of it?" I don't think there's much of a way you can plan on those examples, other than to advise designers; if they really have a vision that they believe in, that they can articulate and define in a little box in their head, to go for it. That's the only way that we make the biggest forward strides in this industry.

**What advice would you give a reader of our magazine that wants to do what you do? What skills and education would you say are vital to enter the world of game development?**

If you think of the three primary roles in game development – the artist, programmer, and designer – we'll skip management [Laughs], my advice for people

looking to get into this industry varies dramatically based on those three. For programming and art, the paths are relatively definable and relatively measurable and achievable.

If a 12 year-old says, "I want to be a game designer", the first thing I say is, "Well, let's sit down and let's talk about this. Why do you want to be a game designer? Because it sounds cool? Or do you really think you can master all of the things that are necessary to be a game designer?" A little side note that I think is kind of interesting and disappointing about our industry is that people want to get into games because they think of them as glamorous. I

always look at design as the weakest area of most companies. I think it's because designers are usually the leftovers of people who all want to be in the game business, but they don't have the natural talent for an artist, and they haven't put in the hard work to become a programmer, and so, [they say], "I'm a designer!" What that gives us is a bunch of really bad designers, so I think our industry is full of poor designers. The reason why I think I've become a good designer is because I got into this industry 20-plus years ago, when I did all my own art, and I wrote all my own code, and I wrote all the text, and I designed the game. So I saw successes and failures of all those parts and how they interrelate, and so I have a very good fundamental understanding of how to engineer those three disciplines into an integrated unit.

**As a veteran game designer, do you sense a generation gap**

**between guys of your age and the younger developers that have entered the industry in recent years?**



**"I always look at design as the weakest area of most companies."**

Absolutely, but I've never been cognizant of it until you just mentioned it. I can tell you [that] *D&D* and *Lord of the Rings* were absolutely my two big influences for *Ultima* – that's it. Then, occasional movies – like *Time Bandits* for *Ultima II* with the cloth maps and time travel. The thing is; that's what we really had to draw on. But that's now part of my being...even now as I'm thinking about new games, I'm reading Buddhist philosophy books for my next game. So, there's no question my inspiration still comes from the outside. It's started on the outside by necessity because there's nothing on

the inside. That will continue to create certain kinds of novel games. I think the advantage we'll have – the old group – is the ability to create innovation that I think the younger kids will miss. On the other hand, this new generation will look at this and say, "I really understand gameplay, I understand how these games work, I've played all of them." Most of the older generation don't play all of the games. This new generation has played everything, and they have become masters of this sphere, specifically video games. A lot of times, their innovation in both technology and gameplay is almost always way beyond what I think I could have pulled off. Whenever I'm building a team, [I try] to find a good mix of young guys who don't know any better than to try the thing everyone else says is impossible, and the experienced people who can guide you around those pitfalls.



# MARK CERNY

Mark Cerny has enjoyed a long and storied career in the video game industry, lending his talents to scores of top-selling titles on a variety of systems. Cerny got his start at Atari in the heyday of the arcade scene and helped create the smash hit *Marble Madness*. Since then, Mark has played an integral role in the success of Sega, Crystal Dynamics, and Universal Interactive Studios. After assisting in the creation of both the *Crash Bandicoot* and *Spyro the Dragon* series at Universal, Mark formed Cerny Games, and is now employed by a number of the world's top development houses as a freelance design guru. His most recent project to hit retail shelves was *Naughty Dog's Jak and Daxter*, and he is currently working on upcoming projects for Electronic Arts and Insomniac Games.



**If you had to come up with a simple mantra for your own game design, what would it be? What distinguishes your games from other designers?**

Only the best games sell, so there's no point in making anything but the best. Then, you have to figure out what that means for your particular project. If you look at what the top quarter of games represent in terms of sales, it's unbelievable. [Laughs] Half of the games out there – maybe they should have been started, because you should probably always check every idea out – but they shouldn't have been finished. That includes projects that I work on as well. My projects are quite regularly cancelled. You have to have the will to kill.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

It would be nice to have a model that is just a bit more like the way that movies are made. When movies are made, independent professionals come together for the space of the project, and then go onto the next project. That lets you have the best possible people in every category because you're going out to freelancers for your cinematographer, your producers, your directors, and your writers. The way it is now in games, because it's on a company basis, it's a bit harder. You may not have a person that does a specific thing, simply because your last project didn't require it. Or, you may get someone who you don't need on your next project, because the genres are different. A better structure would help. We're trying to do that with Cerny Games. I love it, because I get to work on multiple projects at once and get to learn three or four times faster than if I was just working on one project at a time.

**What games, or game designers, have been the biggest influence on your work?**

Well, I have to say that The

Legend of Dragoon and Final Fantasy X have been incredible play experiences for me lately. Halo – that's amazing as well.

When I started out at Atari, there were two guys that I wanted to work with. They were Dave Theurer of Missile Command and Tempest fame, and Ed Logg of Asteroids and Gauntlet fame. I actually did get to work with Ed for six weeks on Millipede. It was wonderful. He was so generous. Financially, there was a brief window where you could actually get nice royalties as a coin-operated game designer. Thanks to Ed, I got enough money in the bank that I could go independent for the first time. That was in 1985.

**What advice would you give a reader of our magazine that wants to do what you do? What skills and education would you say are vital to enter the world of game development?**

These days, you can still do it. There are even awards for independent games. Of course, it's usually on the PC side, because it's hard to get the dev kits for the consoles. If you have a vision, you can get it out there. Also, there are schools now that teach game design. There are a few in the States, but it's huge in Japan. If you flip through Famitsu, you can see tons of ads for them.

I don't know what to say other than that college seems to help. In my case, I had two hobbies in college – playing video games and programming. Then, I got interviewed for a

book on video game strategy that Craig Kubey published in 1982. He was kind enough to talk to some people at Atari and get me an interview. Once I'd been hired, they actually had me write up a resume and submit it to the HR department for the sake of completion, because they needed to have a resume of everyone that worked there on file. Six weeks later, HR sent me a form letter declining to interview me based on my background! [Laughs] So, I was lucky to know somebody. There's always a little serendipity in action.

**In the time that you've been in the industry, what do you think are the biggest changes you've seen? How has this affected your job?**



Oh God, well, when I started in the industry my lead character was eight pixels by eight pixels on a screen and the playfield didn't scroll! [Laughs] Oh, and projects had a staff of one person. It's changed beyond comprehension in 20 years. I wish I'd have known then how it all was going to evolve. Looking back, there were so many obvious things that were going to happen that I was too dumb to realize. The whole fighting game revolution, for example – if I'd known in 1983 that fighting games like *Street Fighter* were going to be out there and be so huge, there's no reason I couldn't have done that. It just never occurred to me.

**"Only the best games sell, so there's no point in making anything but the best."**

# AMERICAN MCGEE



American McGee's success, like so many great game designers, can be attributed to a combination of good fortune and hard work. At the age of 20, McGee left his job as an auto mechanic to work for id Software and its legendary leader, John Carmack (who was his next-door neighbor at the time). After paying his dues in tech support, American moved on to tackle programming and sound design. His work on the Doom and Quake series won him acclaim, allowing him to split off from id and create his own best-selling PC hit, American McGee's Alice. Currently one of the guiding forces behind Carbon6 Entertainment, American is working on a number of projects, including a game loosely based on *The Wizard of Oz*.

**If you had to come up with a simple mantra for your own game design, what would it be? What distinguishes your games from other designers?**

Well, the first thing we [did] with Alice and what we're doing with Oz is looking at [whether] this is an environment that you're going to be fully immersed in. Does it feel believable? Is it going to be something that is different from everything else that's out there right now? Alice was spawned from my frustrations from seeing so many space Manne versus space alien games being done over and over again. It was like; Jesus, somebody needs to introduce a new environment to this gameplay mechanism. With Oz, we're focusing not so much on realism as a really artfully crafted world. As a matter of fact, we're talking right now about rendering the world out in sort of a cut-out storybook style so it feels like you're walking through a pop-up book or a diorama.

**What would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?**

Some things we're really trying to focus on are ease of use, playability, and making games more fun. That sounds like a basic thing, but there's really a whole leftover, screwed-up legacy of game design philosophy that I think needs to be thrown away. I think games are just too difficult. A lot of people will pick up a game because it feels really cool, but the moment they run into one of our basic game design tactics – like the increasing difficulty of the game as time progresses or the complex interface – they'll become frustrated and walk away. That's really unfortunate. If you're reading a book, the book doesn't get harder to read. As you progress through the chapters, it doesn't suddenly switch to Italian halfway through the book. It's not about challenging you; it's about being in that space and wanting to be a part of it.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

I'd like to see a hardware freeze for five years. I think that, if we had a standardized piece of hardware that everyone was developing for, it would help us to advance the craft while not having to chase new milestones in technology. Then, the technology kind of stuff, in essence, would stop and everyone would focus on content.

**You seem really artistically minded in terms of wanting to create unique worlds and mimicking cinematic techniques. Do you think you're unique in that regard?**

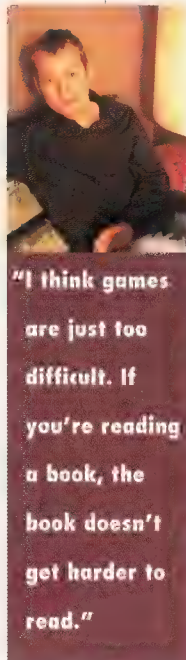
No, I don't think I'm unique in that. I think everyone in this industry – whether they believe that they're doing it or not – is approaching it from that angle. There's a lot to be learned in the lessons that Hollywood has learned. I think one of the sad things that goes on in our industry is we throw out lessons learned. For example, Half-Life was a great game that established an amazing interface and a great way of telling stories. Everything about it was pretty much perfect. What was funny is that, after Half-Life came out, the first-person action/adventure titles did not get better. They did not learn the lessons taught by Half-Life, because developers and game designers said, "Well, I can do it better." Well, maybe you can; but the innovation that was put forth should have been learned from. You can't let your ego get in the way of borrowing from someone. Borrow, and borrow liberally. Be happy that someone provided an idea for you that you can apply to your problems.

**Video games have been around for nearly 30 years. Have we reached the point where we are just endlessly refining the same genres? Are there any completely new genres left to be explored?**

It's going to get to the point where these are interactive experiences where – instead of choosing what kind of game-play – you're going to choose which kind of content. Today, I might feel like playing horror; tonight, I want to play fantasy; tomorrow, I want to play sci-fi. It's really going to come down to the content. The means through which you experience that content [are] going to start combining, because ultimately what we're trying to do is re-create reality. So, the mechanism to how we get there – the interface and the way it's rendered – is eventually going to become very standardized. In film, there is a standard function for how you do scene cuts, standard ideas about how dialogue and character development works. We're going to establish the same sort of

rules in our industry. The difference is that – in a game – you can go in and play that story from almost any angle. In a film, you ride through that on a linear path. [Video game] storytelling is going to be about the experience you create for yourself.

Eventually, it [will] feel like, as in games like Grand Theft Auto III, that you're in that world. These ideas of interface and control will be moot because we will be plugging directly into it. It will become *The Matrix*, in essence. [Laughs]





# CLIFF BLESZINSKI

**W**hat games, or game designers, have been the biggest influences on your work?

I've got to give credit to id, because they busted open the whole first-person genre. I grew up playing Miyamoto's games, of course. Some of my fondest memories are of Mario and Zelda. Meeting him was a wonderful thing. I think the one thing that I hope to eventually start to do in the games that we make is to have that sense of discovery. You get to that point in your mid-twenties where you really start to get jaded, especially working in this industry. A lot of the magic is lost. I can't even look at an action figure now without saying, "How many points of articulation are there? The paint job on that is \$#!%." I had that the other day when I was looking at Transformers. When I was a kid, I was so into Transformers. Now, I'm at Target looking at Transformers, and they're actually a thousand times better than the ones I played with as a kid, but they still don't look cool to me. A lot of that magic is lost, but that's what Zelda did for me. [After playing Zelda] I used to go into the woods and lift up logs and barrels and tires and look for snakes and frogs, and sometimes find the occasional adult magazine that was left in the woods [Laughs]. That sense of discovery is something that Zelda did for me that few video games managed to capture. I hope to someday do that myself.

**In the time that you've been in the industry, what do you think are the biggest changes you've seen? How has this affected your job?**

In the time I've been doing this, the whole online thing is just huge. You look at online and [you realize] that we have a form where we basically have to design for the lowest common denominator of a...hole behavior. I'm not willing to put an exploit in the game where you can have friendly fire. I'm not ever going to have that on by default in a game that Epic ships. Hey, I've done it; I've gone on

servers and tried to break the game and be the biggest %&\*! possible. That's the kind of thing you have to deal with in online; I call it the Beavis factor. You have to ask yourself, "What would the Dread Lord Beavis in Ultima Online do?" — because someone's going to do it. It's always fun to go online and be an idiot, because you have that anonymity. That will come to consoles, and console developers will have to deal with it. It really limits your choices in your game design.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

I would make an arbitrary rule that all in-game cinematics can be no longer than 30 seconds. If I had another wish, I would make it so game designers realize that they're not really storytellers, they're craftsmen of game mechanics. They need to work with writers, and also hire real voice talent. If I play another game that has half-hour long cinematics with bad acting and a convoluted story, I'm going to puke. There has been a recent crop of games that have been great games [in which] the experience has been dragged down by these developers trying to be Hollywood directors. I'm not going to name names, but it's very frustrating for me. I'm not going to lie — some of our upcoming games are probably going to have cinematics in them; but really, show some restraint. You're not Francis Ford Copolla. Am I the only one

who's not getting these stories?

**Video games have been around for nearly 30 years. Have we reached the point where we are just endlessly refining the same genres? Are there any completely new genres left to be explored?**

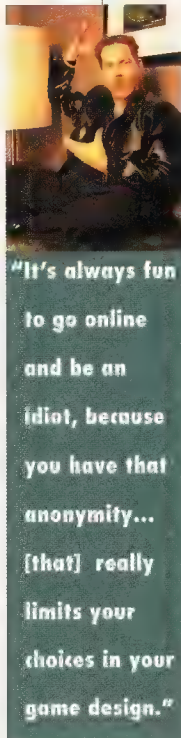
Sometimes, but everybody bitches like that's a bad thing. I don't mind. Half-Life took an existing formula, and tweaked it to perfection.

Is that so bad? You get a lot of these hoity-toity industry types that scream, "We need to completely innovate and make it a completely new genre!" Sure, there's room for that, but don't count out the fact that sometimes I just want an evolved version of what I've played before. Why? Because I know the rules. There aren't many surprises; and it's a similar experience, but a cooler one. I don't think that's a bad thing. To some extent, that's the kind of games that we make. We take elements of existing games, improve upon them, and make them prettier. Sometimes that's all you need.

**What makes you get back in the saddle again and make another game?**

Because I'd be doing this even if I wasn't getting paid. Don't tell anybody that! [Laughs] I've wanted to do this since I

was six and saw Space Invaders at my white trash neighbor's house. Right then, it clicked. We were just enthralled by that. It's a bonus that you can make a decent living at it.



Cliff Bleszinski started developing games at his mother's house at the tender age of 11, including *Spermatozoa* and *The Palace of Deceit 2*; *Dragon's Plight*, and by 17 had been tapped to work for Epic Games. His first major success at Epic came as the lead designer for the PC hits *Jazz Jackrabbit 1 & 2*. After 10 years in the business, Bleszinski has become one of the masters of the first-person shooter genre. His design work on *Unreal* and *Unreal Tournament* made that series one of the most popular PC franchises of the past 10 years. Currently, Cliff is acting as producer for both *Unreal Episode II* for the PC and *Unreal Championship* for the Xbox.



# SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

**T**hese past few years have seen online gaming really mature and grow. How do you see the future of online gaming taking form? Will it replace the single-player experience? Is broadband going to be the entertainment revolution we're being promised?

First of all, I do not think that online gaming will put an end to the single-player game. If you look at what Nintendo has done in the past, with the NES, we first added two controller ports for two-player games. With the Nintendo 64, we were the first to add four controller ports so you could have four-player games. If you think about it, online is essentially another method of increasing these types of interaction with the players. So, I think that it's really just one genre among many in gaming. I actually think that it's kind of strange that so many game designers are focusing so intently on online gaming. Certainly, there are games where going online will make the gameplay more fun, but the same can be said about taking a one-player game and making it a two-player game. It can make that more fun, too. I think this thinking [that] if a game goes online it will automatically become more fun is not true. Focusing so much on that, people lose sight of ways of being creative and coming up with new ideas.

**What would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?**

Maybe I can write a book about that and make a lot of money. [Laughs] I really think that it's not about making what is popular or trendy, or what has succeeded in the past in games. It's not about trying to recreate that. But really to me, the most important thing is to create what you want to create, and to really incorporate your own personality into your games and come up with new ideas and new ways to entertain people. That, to me, is the most important part. If you're walking the same path as someone else, then you have a lot of pressure to do as well as they have done and not to lose out to them.

But if you are walking on your own path, the only pressure – and it is a big pressure – is what if you find yourself at a dead end? To me I think that that type of pressure is much more productive and effective creatively than trying to compete with someone else.

**What advice would you give a reader of our magazine that wants to do what you do? What skills and education would you say are vital to enter the world of game development?**

Well actually, what I've been saying lately, especially targeted toward younger kids and elementary school kids, is that you shouldn't just play games; and you should expose yourself to many different activities. When I was young, I drew comic books, made puppets, played outdoors, hiked in the mountains, and did a lot swimming and things. So that's kind of the message that I've been sending to younger kids. You really need to expose yourself to many different experiences and that will help you creatively in the future. I think that for people who are a little bit older, it is really important to have a technical skill. Without that, you're going to have a hard time getting started in the industry. So, whether you learn programming, or you learn to draw; some kind of skill like that that is valuable in the video game industry can help you get your foot in the door.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

I think maybe if I could do anything, I would make it so you don't have to sit in front of a TV and play. If you could have a machine that you just plugged in and played inside a virtual world – that would be just great.

**What games, or game designers, have been the biggest influence on your work?**

First off, I can't really say that I've been influenced by video games, because when I first came into the industry there really hadn't been any video games prior to that. I mean, the first time that I saw Space Invaders, the thing that impressed me the most wasn't the fact that there was this battle going on on-screen, but it was the fact that you would see one pixel go and collide with another one, and then disappear and vanish. I thought, "Wow that's some impressive technology." And, then, Pac-Man was a game to me [that] was the first time that design really came to life in a game. So, that game really impressed me. For me personally, I think one thing that has

influenced me has been some of the storytelling or performance styles of art in Japan where a person is on stage speaking. Something like that has influenced me, but also in Japan they have the big comic books and four-panel comic strips that tell a single story in just four panels. As a kid, I used to draw a lot of those, and I think that those influenced me as well.

**"The most important thing is to create what you want to create, and to really incorporate your own personality into your games."**



Almost universally lauded as the greatest game designer in history, Shigeru Miyamoto is truly a living legend, and a member of the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences' Hall of Fame. In 1981, Miyamoto stepped out of his role as a staff artist at Nintendo to develop the arcade smash Donkey Kong, and since then, he has released at least one classic title nearly every year. The Mario series is perhaps his best-known creation, followed closely by The Legend of Zelda franchise. Currently working on the highly anticipated Mario Sunshine for the GameCube, Miyamoto also took time out to release two innovative hits, Pikmin and Luigi's Mansion, last year. Always busy, Miyamoto is overseeing a number of projects at Nintendo, including Metroid Prime, his collaboration with Retro Studios in Austin.



## SID MEIER

Sid Meier is one of the true stars in the gaming world, so much so that his name has become a brand name all its own. From his early days as a co-founder of MicroProse Software, where he spearheaded such groundbreaking projects as *F-15 Strike Eagle*, *Silent Service*, and *Pirates*; Meier has pioneered the use of complex game-play mechanics deeply rooted in historical and technological events. His greatest achievement is, of course, the *Civilization* series, which created an entirely new genre that has become known as "God Games." Recently, Meier has released *Civilization III*, and Sid Meier's *SimGolf*, a tribute to the works of his friend and colleague Will Wright.



**If you had to come up with a simple mantra for your own game design, what would it be?**

I think we're looking for a couple of different things. In a new game, we want to surprise people a little bit; we want to give people maybe more than they were expecting out of a game. When you hear about a title or see a screenshot, you kind of say, "I know what that game is about." We hope to give you that, plus some more. In a game like *SimGolf* or *Gettysburg*—those titles that are brand new—we're basically trying to surprise you with the cool stuff we've put in that game. A game like *Civ*—our strategy game that's kind of based on our legacy of strategy games—we're trying to kind of find that balance between keeping what was good about the previous game that people like, but also surprising people a little bit and adding new stuff to it. [That way] it's a slightly different problem depending on whether we're building based on a previous game or doing something new. Hopefully people say, "Wow, they really thought about this, and they put some stuff in there, and they tried it out and it works. Yet, it really fits with what I was expecting." So, we're trying to surprise people a little bit with what they find in our games. At the same time, we try and be true to the legacy of games that we've done, so that if you've played Sid Meier games before, you're not going to be disappointed or shocked at what comes in there.

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

I think I would like for us to show a little bit more responsibility in terms of the content and the messages in the games that we create. When we were small and our audience consisted of mostly social misfits, it was different. You know, hardcore gamers—that was one thing. I think now that we're growing, our message reaches a lot more people, some very impressionable. I think we need to be responsible with what the content of our game is, and the messages we send out. I'm not advocating censorship, but I just think that we're all now speaking to a much larger audience, and we just need to be aware of that. Part of growing up as an industry is

[the fact that] we can't just do whatever we feel like, and try to shock people, or do things that we could kind of get away with when we were a small industry. That was just a way of getting attention. We can't take those easy paths to get attention.

**What would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?**

Well, I've said the word "fun" about a million times today, so I'm staying away from that word. [Laughs] We create the gameplay first, and then we add graphics and sounds, and all of the presentation. We think that—at the heart of our games—there's a real game there. We present you with a neat situation where you have to find your way through and find a strategy and there are a lot of different things you can try. So, we feel that good gameplay is the rock-bottom essential part of the products we do.

**Video games have been around for nearly 30 years. Have we reached the point where we are just endlessly refining the same genres? Are there any completely new genres left to be explored?**

I like the word "refine." There's something really good about that word. We've dealt with that question for quite a while. I'm glad there's a *Diablo II*, even though there's already a *Diablo*. I glad there's a *StarCraft*, even though there was a *WarCraft*. So refining, making it pure and better, is a good thing. There's certainly the danger that we don't need everybody to do a *StarCraft*, especially if all you're doing is changing the pictures and calling it a new game. But, I think there's a balance between the games that are part of the refine-

ment process, and games that are reaching out to create something brand new. Most brand new games need one level of refinement to really reach their potential. The first game is kind of "Oooh! Cool!" but, now that we see the game, here's how we can really make it cool. I think that's true of a lot of games: the first game is innovative and fun, and the second game really built on it and added polish and refinement to the gameplay.



*"I think we need to be responsible with the content...and the messages we send out."*

**What games, or game designers, have been the biggest influence on your work?**

Well, when I started out, the computer gaming world was very different. Computer gaming combined two things I was already interested in—games that I had been playing since I was a kid; and computers, which was basically my career. Back then, you didn't have to get into the industry, you just kind of sat down in

front of your computer and said, "I am now a game designer." You started designing a game—you didn't have to pass the Bar or anything. [Laughs] You just kind of declared yourself a computer game person, and nobody was going to argue with you. [Laughs] Today, there are massive companies and it's a different story. Computers were faceless, mindless, numbercrunching things. The idea that creativity could come out of computers was not an obvious connection in those days. People like Will Wright, Chris Crawford and Scott Adams made us realize that computers could be a tool for doing something creative. Certainly, that was part of what inspired me to find what I would like or what I could do in terms of computer gaming, and, as they say, the rest is history.

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# KERS LE IDE

Big numbers create a visual page you'll want to print. Do, what can you do about it?

## WILL WRIGHT

**W**hat would you say are the key elements that make for a truly great game?

Well, an installer is one. [Laughs] You'd be surprised at how many beautifully done games there are where the installer sucks. I usually start kind of top-down, with a concept and subject matter that I'll research for years at a time. I'm always reading a lot of stuff and looking for a germ of an idea that really fascinates me. I usually can't figure out why it fascinates me, and this whole process begins of figuring out why it fascinates me and stripping away all the non-essential stuff. If I had a checklist of what every game needed, it would both seem boring to me and I would be missing a lot of cool stuff. I'm always trying, within this rough structure that I have, to get out of the structure. How do I not make the same game over and over? Then there are the basic gameplay things – it's got to be accessible. I'm very focused on making the games appealing to a wide audience. Then, there's a lot of interface work, a lot of playtesting with people that have never seen the game before. Finally, I want the game to lead to some slightly heightened perception of the world around you; after playing the game you should be seeing the world in a slightly different way. Those are the rough guidelines.

**When you make, say SimAnt, do you go buy a big ant farm and go crazy for awhile?**

Oh yeah. We had several ant farms in the office. There's this one guy, Edward O. Wilson, who is one of the top entomologists in the world. It was really based on his work; he wrote several books on ants. Actually, the year that SimAnt came out, he published his magnum opus, called *The Ants*, which won the Pulitzer Prize that year. He's one of my academic heroes. He understood why ants were so cool, and I was trying to convey that to a larger audience. SimAnt was successful in the marketplace, but it really ended up

appealing more to kids than adults. I don't think that adults understood the deep lessons that we were trying to get across in there. Kids understood, but they're not usually our design problem – the adults are. [Laughs]

**If you could change one thing about the video game industry, what would it be?**

I'd like to see us address more contemporary, relevant issues. If you look at most of what's on prime time television, or what's in bookstores, or what's in movies, most of them are in contemporary environments that people are very comfortable in. They can hop right in; they don't have to understand the way magic works or they don't have to understand history to really understand the context. I think this is an incredibly powerful medium, because you're interacting with something and you have a stake in it. There are emotions that film does very well, when you're empathizing with the characters. But there are a couple of emotions that film doesn't do at all; and that's where games shine. These are things like pride and

guilt. When is the last time you felt guilty watching a film? Whereas, I felt bad about myself in *Black & White* after I beat the hell out of a creature. So, I think that we can use that power to a tremendous advantage to get people to understand the world around them better. If you walk

away from the game, and all of a sudden you're thinking in a different way, then the game has been socially relevant. It's changed your life in some little tiny way. I'd like to see more games pursuing that.

**Video games have been around for nearly 30 years. Have we reached the point where we are just endlessly refining the same genres? Are there any completely new genres left to be explored?**

I sure hope not. I think that there are huge numbers of genres yet to be discovered. I'm convinced of it. Look at it like a landscape; a landscape of all the different games that could possibly be made. The genres right now represent peaks on this landscape.

Somebody built *Doom II* over here, and people parachuted onto that peak. Then, over here, somebody built *Command & Conquer*, and *WarCraft* over here. Pretty soon, you have settlers come and explore every nook and cranny on top of these mountains. For all you know, there might be another huge peak somewhere else, it's just that nobody's sent a paratrooper down to survey that space yet. Every once in awhile, people send little explorers out here and there, and they might find another

peak; it might not be a huge mountain, but it's still cool. Something like *PaRappa*. I would much rather, as a designer, be exploring the spaces between the peaks than looking under the rocks of an established peak that's already settled.

Will Wright, a tremendously gifted game designer, is the man who made the word "sim" part of the popular lexicon. Starting with the release of *SimCity* in 1989, Wright has introduced generations of gamers to the joys of controlling complex social and economic structures. Wright has refined his vision through a number of Sim sequels, including *SimAnt*, *SimCity 2000*, and *SimFarm*. In 2000, he took his heady concepts to new heights with *The Sims*, the first game to allow players the ability to control the lives of virtual humans. The game was the biggest selling PC title of 2000, and has spawned a number of popular expansion packs. His next project, *The Sims Online*, promises to take multiplayer online gaming to a new, mainstream audience that has not yet been tapped.



**"If I had a checklist of what every game needed, it would both seem boring to me and I would be missing a lot of cool stuff."**







**SMOKERS  
INHALE  
CYANIDE**

**VEGETARIAN**  
save your *titles*  
from  
the  
hell  
you  
are  
in  
now  
before  
it's  
too  
late

**SMOKERS  
INHALE  
CYANIDE**

Spread the knowledge.  
Infect **truth**

# PREVIEWS



XBOX/PC

## ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

### LOSE YOURSELF

#### Games like Morrowind

are often nerve-wracking to follow. You hear about it the first time, and you're amazed. Then, a couple of years later, the game finally releases. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but the anticipation this generates is enough to make one's mind melt. With the scope

Bethesda has set forth in this title, things have taken a long time to come to fruition. Now, for the first time, we've gotten a glimpse as to how the game is going to play the day it hits retail shelves.

Role-players should probably go sit on the toilet when they read the rest of this – Morrowind is definitely the kind of title that will make you want to fill your drawers with delight.

The amount of complexity involved in this game could swallow you whole if you're not patient and careful. After the opening character creation sequence, you're given a mission, then thrust

into a vast world with only your wits to guide you. Depending on how you built your in-game personality, non-player characters will react to you in assorted ways. For instance, a thief with very little charisma isn't going to get a lot of leniency when it comes to bartering, as opposed to, say, a knight. Of course, it's also possible to make a charismatic thief and an unlikely knight – it's completely up to you. Do you see a pattern emerging here? Morrowind is a world in itself, and you must choose how you wish to interact with it. If life is about choices, then this title is an excellent approximation of that idea. Each decision you make will affect the outcome of the game.

One decision that won't directly affect the outcome of your game is how you view the world. Your viewpoint can be switched between first- and third-person perspectives at the touch of a button, and combat is fairly straightforward – if you see something hostile in front of you, swing at it with your weapon until it dies, or fire off a spell. Think EverQuest, if you're having a hard time visualizing that. Obviously, the PC is going to be a little more user-friendly when it comes to interface and control configurations, but a little practice with the Xbox control scheme will have you slicing and dicing in no time.

Different cultures, races, political factions, and religious organizations have been created and set in motion throughout all the territories available for exploration. Additionally, real-time weather and

time patterns run as you carry out your assignments and complete your quests. There are no barriers in this title: If you want to join the thief's guild, break into a house at night, then sneak up on to the roof and watch the sun rise. Not only are you able to do that, but you'll be rewarded for successfully utilizing your chosen skills while creeping through some poor guy's bedroom. Joining a trade guild will also act as a game-within-a-game. You'll be given different tasks to accomplish, and as you complete them, your power and prestige within your organization will grow.

What all of this boils down to is an RPG that will be truly amazing to play. We have rarely seen the amount of detail put into every inch of this game – graphics, sound, NPC interaction, character statistics, social and environmental interactions, quests, sidequests, weapons, armor, items, abilities, specialties...the list goes on and on. Elder Scrolls III is sure to bring new meaning to the lives of role-playing junkies around the world. Add to all of this the PC construction set where you can create your own Morrowind reality and trade it with your friends, and you've got the next big thing to hit the fantasy gaming market.

"You will soon end up like your little friend, Paltin!"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWAREWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** BETHESDA SOFTWAREWORKS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26 (PC), APRIL 29 (XBOX)





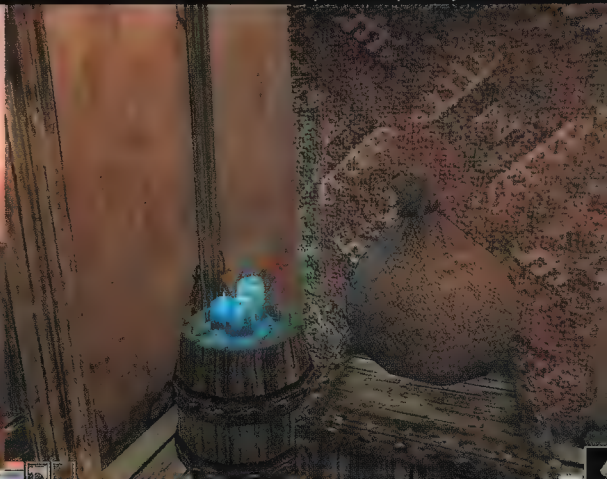
All of your stats and skills are readily accessible



Here's what we want to know: How does she put on all of that lipstick and eyeshadow?



Sunsets are gorgeous if you have a good vantage point



The light these candles give is dynamically reflected off of the objects near them



It's not a bad idea to have your sword ready in some towns



We bought this axe cheap, and you can see why



PLAYSTATION 2

# FINAL FANTASY XI

ONLINE'S JUST FINE

**Final Fantasy's journey** into the world of online role-playing is nearing the preparation stages. Beta testing wrapped up on April 24. If all systems are go, the game should release less than a month after that in Japan. We can only hope localization will be as short as possible, so American gamers can get their MMORPG on, too.

Though this adventure takes place purely online, many new systems, as well as some throwback ones, are in there to keep you occupied. First comes the job system, familiar to those who have played Final Fantasy V (on Final Fantasy Anthology) or Final Fantasy Tactics. Your character will be able to pick from over a dozen different jobs, including typical selections from thief, monk, and black mage; and strange ones like bard, beastmaster, ranger, and dark knight.

Each job has its own distinct characteristics and special skills that you'll learn. For example, a black mage doesn't have much attack power, but he's great with attack spells. A monk fights without a sword, but hones his hands and feet into deadly weapons. Unrelated to the jobs, but a change nonetheless, is FF XI's mission ranking system - influenced by your performance in completing activities - which can lead to promotions within your group.

After a hiatus in Final Fantasy X, experience points and gaining levels have returned. This time, when you're alone, the

amount you're rewarded is based on your current level. The higher the level, the less you'll receive. When in a party, the points are based on the character with the highest level, and then divided amongst the group. Basically, you'll be penalized for having more experienced people with you. That means you'll be able to defeat harder enemies, though, so it evens out.

Weapon skills are another cool addition to the series. These special attacks occur when you fill up your TP (tactical point) meter, located under your HP and MP. There are various levels which you can attain for stronger attacks, much like Final Fantasy VII's limit breaks.

Crystals play an important part in the game. They are imbued with eight different elements - fire, water, earth, ice, wind, thunder, light, and darkness - and have countless uses. For one, they can be combined with other items to make new, more effective things, like potions, new weapons, etc. They also have their own functions, relative to the element contained in them. Some of their uses require you to know a certain skill, or first attain a certain level.

As you can see, Final Fantasy XI has unmatched depth for an online RPG, and stays true to the innovative tradition of the series. This game is set to revolutionize the way console gamers think about role-playing games, and we couldn't be more excited.

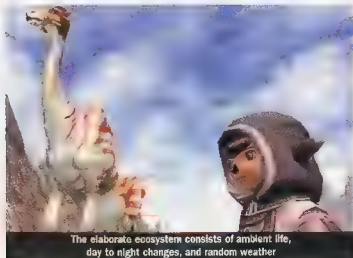


The shadow dragon's got some nasty tricks up its sleeve



You'll be doing lots of running...

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 16 JAPAN, USA DATE TBA



The elaborate ecosystem consists of ambient life, day to night changes, and random weather



It's a party!



...and more running



## PREVIEWS



These taru taru have become black mages



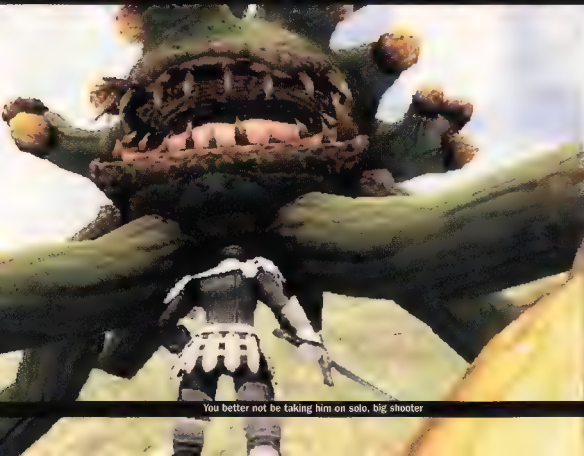
Each area has its own ambient life for you to slaughter



Chocobos come in different sizes...



...including tiny ones for taru taru



You better not be taking him on solo, big shooter



"I hate to break it to you, but you're in the wrong game. What you're looking for is Pikmin"



XBOX

# MECHASSAULT

MECH-A-LECH-A-HI, MECH-A-HI-NEE-HO

**Many of you** out there are part of the pencil-and-paper MechWarrior crowd. Not that there's anything wrong with that! A few of those on staff here at this incredibly nerd-free magazine (ahem) have partaken in this as well. The MechCommander and MechWarrior series, which are both enormous Microsoft-published successes on the PC, have tided us over for this long. We loved the amount of detail and realism programmed into each and every one of those titles, but now we want something fast! Something unbelievably destructive! Something we don't need 833 buttons to play! Look no further, amigos – MechAssault is on the way.

Set in the vast BattleTech universe, this Xbox-exclusive title will draw from the rich, 15-year history surrounding this subject. As a member of the WolfDragoon mercenaries, you have been sent down to a planet filled with pirates. Your mission is to obliterate anything and everything in your path. Every person on this new world is pure evil – bent on theft and destruction out there in the far reaches of space. Now it's time to bring it to their house. Luckily for you, the pirates have been good enough to build enormous cities. This may sound like it would make things harder, but no! As you can see from the pictures, the more things there are to destroy, the more fun this game is going to be.

Every structure – be it a bridge, tower, bus, skyscraper, or base – is fully destructible. Now, when we say “destructible,” we don't mean you can shoot at these things a few times and they'll eventually blow up. No. We mean you can absolutely decimate these, and many other items, until they topple over in a gigantic collapse of dust and fire. Every structure has a unique destruction animation, so an apartment building is going to collapse much differently than a high-rise. Additionally, each of your weapons will have a different effect on your target. An SRM is going to leave a different hole than a Gauss Rifle or a PPC. Once you've made these holes, you'll be able to walk up to the building and actually see twisted re-bar, blasted insulation, and people running around inside them searching for weapons to shoot at you with.

As a pure action Mech-based brawler, MechAssault will follow an objective-based gameplay formula, and also utilize the same control schematic that Halo put into

practice. As product manager Raja Subramoni pointed out, sticking to the controls that a vast percentage of Xboxers out there are already familiar with is a good way for experienced gamers to hit the ground running. A dozen Mechs (two of which have never been seen before) will be available for loadout, and online multiplayer with voice-activation support has also been promised. The release for MechAssault is approximated at November, but the smart money would probably be on a holiday launch if you're in a betting mood. We'll have more for you on this promising game in the coming months.

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4 PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
- **DEVELOPER** DAY 1 STUDIOS
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



Airborne enemies bring death from above



Energy weapons make for some nice screenshots





Shattering glass and flying debris are just a couple of things that will reward you when you hit a structure



It's hard to make out through the snow, but that's an Atlas this Cougar is going up against



The scale of the cities you "visit" is incredible



PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

## TEST DRIVE SOUL RACING

**Being a leader** means that everyone is gunning for you — especially in the unforgiving world of video game development. Few would argue that Gran Turismo 3 currently holds the title for the best all-around next-generation racing title available. Drive is going to try to push that king off its hill with an altogether different gameplan scheme. With over 40 racing challenges divided between the four areas your character visits (San Francisco, London, Tokyo and Mexico), you'll be thrust into the dangerous and fast-paced world of street racing. Of course, there will be trash talking and a continuing plotline which is pushed forward by a number of pre-rendered cutscenes. But one thing you'll definitely notice is a whole lot of attitude put into every inch of this test drive. Test Drive will not have the absolute accuracy that some of its cousins enjoy, or the license garage of say Need for Speed, but it will have the market cornered on arcade racing satisfaction. With police chasing you, rivals hounding you, and some great-looking environments to take in, we have a feeling this release will work its way into the hearts of quite a few video racers this summer.



Isn't that intake going to obscure the driver's vision?



Jumping is always better if you do it with a friend



This car will be hard to shake



"You're going the wrong way!"

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2 PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** PITBULL SYNDICATE ■ **RELEASE** 2ND QUARTER



PLAYSTATION 2

# SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

DIGITAL REJUVENATION

In recent years, most comic book faithful have abandoned the Kryptonian wonder. The idea behind Superman just doesn't click with the modern age. Nowadays, comic characters have an edge and are unpredictable. Superman, on the other hand, is still the nice guy who saves the day. Although his popularity is waning, Infogrames is taking a shot at the Man of Steel and is creating two different console titles. The Xbox will receive a game based on the comic series (see last issue), while a game based on Warner Brother's animated series is currently slated for the PlayStation 2. With the title, *Shadow of Apokolips*, it's apparent who the arch nemesis of this PS2 caper is. The ruthless tyrant Darksied has joined forces with Luthor for the sole intent of crushing Superman. The story is being penned in conjunction with DC Comics, and will tap into every aspect of the Superman universe. Along with cameo appearances by Jimmy Olsen, Parasite, and Maggie Sawyer, the game will also make extensive use of the voice talent from the animated series — most notably Tim Daly, Michael York, Lori Petty, and Malcolm McDowell. Much like Ubi Soft's *Batman: Vengeance*, Infogrames' intention is to seamlessly intertwine

the animated series with the framework of the game.

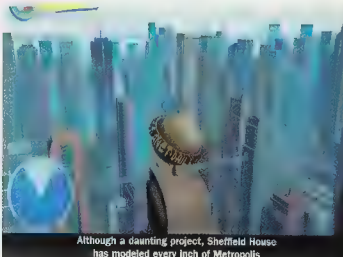
Through cel-shaded animation and a weighty model featuring 5,500 polygons, Superman looks and moves better than he ever has. All of his powers are included as well. When he uses his x-ray vision, objects become transparent. Wind animation accompanies his super-breath. You'll even see motion blur effects when he taps into his super-speed. In its early stages of development, the flying segments of the game are looking fantastic. The controls are very precise, allowing players to effortlessly swoop over the Metropolis' high-rises. You'll even have to work incognito as Clark Kent for some of the objectives. Exact gameplay specifics are still scarce, but it's already become apparent that this is the most ambitious Superman project to date.

If you are a fan of the animated series, or simply want to see the world's greatest in his prime, you won't want to miss *Shadow of Apokolips*. If Infogrames and developer Sheffield House can nail down the play mechanics, this could be Superman's first triumph in the video game world. Stay tuned.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** SHEFFIELD HOUSE ■ **RELEASE** FALL



An auto lock-on system will make targeting an effortless task



Although a daunting project, Sheffield House has modeled every inch of Metropolis



The story will unfold through animated cutscenes featuring spoken dialogue



A wide variety of missions are planned, including rescuing hostages...



...and preventing the detonation of Lex Dam



# PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system

has a new porpoise

## ecco

### THE DOLPHIN DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

70% of Earth's surface is covered with water. That used to be an uneventful fact. Now, with an alien evil intent on the Planet's demise reigning in the deep, that's a fact you fear. Journey deep beneath the sea's glassy surface and into an underwater world of stunning beauty and sinister terror with Ecco, Earth's favorite dolphin crusader, in the game with more adventure than you can fathom.

"...some of the most stunning environments yet seen in a video game... must be experienced by PS2 owners"

ign.com

Match wits with challenging enemy



PlayStation 2



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PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

# ROBOTECH

## MACROSS MANIA!

**There's only one** appropriate way for this preview to begin, and that's with the Robotech theme song. That may not be possible, as this is only a magazine, but do yourself a big favor and hum it while you read on – because if there ever was a need for a triumphant entrance, this game deserves it. TDK has adopted the Robotech license, and from the footage we've seen so far, anime fans and gamers alike can look forward to some pretty intense action coming their way.

Although the game deals with the Macross Saga, developer Vicious Cycle decided that putting players in new situations was the best way to establish the kind of direct connection to the action this shooter demands. Rick Hunter and Roy Fokker? Minimei? Yes, they will be in the game, but will appear as cameos and not playable characters. Vicious Cycle did tell us, however, that it is considering using the show's original voice actors. Still, it's best if you don't get involved with Minimei – she's trouble.

Instead, you'll take control of Veritech Fighter pilot Jack Archer, as he protects the fragile, rebuilding cities of Earth from uprising Zentraedi forces. Robotech takes place late in the Macross saga at the end of the First Robotech War, after the Zentraedi have destroyed the Earth. Integration between the war giants and the "Micronians" of our planet has begun, but it is not easy, as skirmishes have developed in the Wasteland. What unfolds from here is pure delight.

Cel-shading may be the new fad, but if anyone's got a claim

to it, it's Robotech. We've seen vivid battles with Veritech Fighters flying among skyscrapers, shooting off round after round of missiles at giant enemy Battlepods, with the trademark smoke trails streaming across the screen. The game's frenzy of destruction occurs at a fast, consistent framerate, while still maintaining a stylistic integrity that never lets you forget it's Robotech. Buildings are destructible, and the game appears to use a fluid, almost seamless lock-on system that, in conjunction with a quick camera, lets you hit target after target in agile succession.

While in battles, you can utilize the transformation modes of the Veritech totally on the fly. You can fire off a salvo of rockets as a fighter, then switch to Guardian mode (a combo of your fighter and Battloid robot forms) to shoot some rounds from your rifle. In fact, it'll be necessary to use all of them to make your way through the gamut of missions that take you through a variety of locations, including deep space, and even flashbacks to early episodes of the show. Meanwhile, the unfolding story will be told through a mixture of real-time cinematics and anime storyboards, both of which are infused with the character and humor of the TV series.

The themes of Robotech the TV show may have been anti-war and all that, but we here at Game Informer are sure glad of one thing: TDK and Vicious Cycle will make it very, very easy to take up arms, and a controller, in a glorious next-gen fight against the Zentraedi later this year.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** TDK MEDIAEVE ■ **DEVELOPER** VICIOUS CYCLE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER (PS2), OCTOBER (XBOX/GAMECUBE)



Where there are streams of smoke, there are barrages of dazzling fire



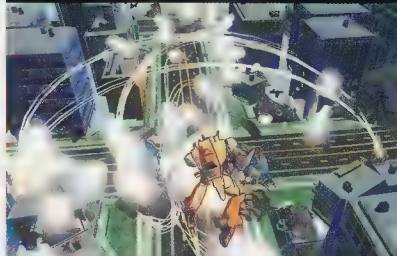
Engage the Zentraedi fleet in a variety of locations



Robotech's sense of scale and style is incredible



Go from a Veritech Fighter...



...to Battloid mode without skipping a beat-down





PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2

# XENOSAGA: EPISODE I DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

## WILL TO POWER

**Namco's publishing of** *Xenosaga: Episode I* may seem weird to some, as its predecessor, *Xenogears*, was a Square product on the PlayStation. Worry not, however, as this new project is being headed by Tetsuya Takahashi – the director of *Xenogears* – and also features other key members of the old team. In fact, the RPG faithful should soundly rejoice, as this loose prequel (which is the first in six parts) serves to appease old fans of the genre with its combat system and exemplary graphical effects.

The story involves the human race in the far future, where the Earth is just a myth dubbed "Lost Jerusalem." Similar to the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Man's fate has been set in motion many, many years before. In a time closer to our own, a monolith later called Zohar is found at an archeological dig. This discovery ends up having repercussions that occur in the game's setting some 4,000 years later. Here humans are at odds with a race called Gnosis, and your character, Shion Uzuki, and her combat android KOSMOS are in the middle of it all.

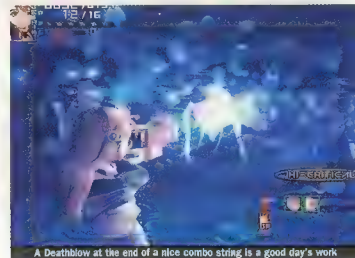
Similar to *Final Fantasy X*, *Xenosaga* features a fully 3D world, but doesn't allow you to move the camera at all. Here enemies will not be random, as they can be seen and will appear on your radar. Some objects in the environments can be destroyed, which will unleash anything from items, enemies, and even advantageous elemental effects.

Combat is turn-based, and features Action Points that you can spend on attacks. Unlike *Xenogears*, however, these are grouped by length, not power. Mixing these up allows you to make multiple strikes in a turn, and since they can be carried over, you can charge up for a Deathblow. These special attacks unleash some truly spectacular sequences that fill the screen in an almost blinding array of effects. The game's mecha component comes in the form of your AGWS (Anti-Gnosis Weapon System). This unit can be deployed as an alter-ego form that can perform combo strings and can be outfitted for maximum effectiveness.

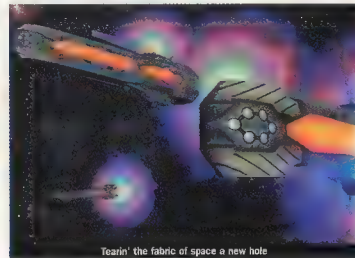
Other combat nuances include Boosts, which are accumulated in a gauge as you fight. Fill it up, and you can insert an extra turn at the beginning of the round. Event Slots are random effects that can offer you certain bonuses. Sometimes you'll get nothing, other times you may be rewarded with extra experience points for your kills. Magic comes in the form of Ether, which also uses your Attack Points when called upon. Whatever your method of destruction, *Xenosaga* delights in its battles, which are always full of visual surprises. Adding to this, the game's cutscenes are almost always in-game, and include some pretty lengthy interludes.

Square may be a vaunted RPG-maker, but *Xenosaga* shows that Monolith Soft's brains, coupled with Namco's publishing brawn, can offer up a title that the genre can be very, very proud of.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER MONOLITH SOFT ■ RELEASE FALL



A Deathblow at the end of a nice combo string is a good day's work



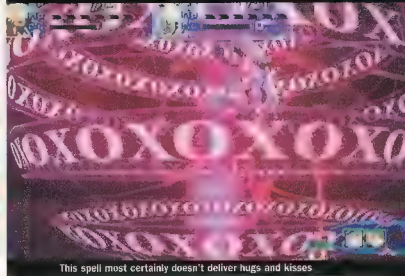
Tearin' the fabric of space a new hole



JZ's Auto Body handles all your spacecraft detailing needs – whether it's for your big rig or monolith



AGWS is your powerful mecha alter ego



This spell most certainly doesn't deliver hugs and kisses



Goldberg-esque newbie Marduk has King's covering up like a hoidy-oid



"To the moon, Paul!"



Paul lets his hair down and goes right for the heart

PLAYSTATION 2

# TEKKEN 4

FOUR ON THE FLOOR,  
TEKKEN'S AT THE DOOR

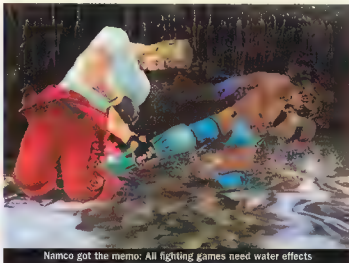
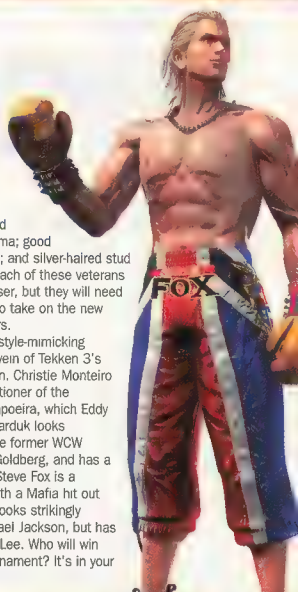
**Namco has been** tooling around with the PlayStation 2 since day one. Tekken Tag was a PS2 launch title in both America and Japan, and finally a true series sequel is on the way. Already in arcades across the country, the King of Iron Fist tournament is going to be held in your house soon.

The competition for Tekken will be stiffer than a kick in the teeth. Namco's own Soul Calibur 2 is fast approaching. We can't forget the fourth installment of Sega's Virtua Fighter series – the arch-nemesis of Tekken, and our current game of the month. When we say competition, though, we don't just mean for the franchise as a whole – we're talking about combatants new and old to the tournament. Not only did we get these new screens, we've got the info hook-up on all those who dare to fight for their right to party.

The roster of returning fighters includes: the grizzly bear Kuma; the adorable Panda; sexy Nina Williams; tank-tossing cyborg Bryan Fury; college gal Julia Chang; reluctant Mishima descendant Jin Kazama; loner and hair nightmare Paul Phoenix; cute schoolgirl Ling Xiaoyu; scary ninja Yoshimitsu; tae kwon do all-star Hwoarang; resurrected Kazuya; pro wrestler King; Bruce Lee wanna-be Marshall

Law; grumpy old Heihachi Mishima; good cop Lei Wulong; and silver-haired stud Lee Chaolan. Each of these veterans is older and wiser, but they will need all their savvy to take on the new breed of fighters.

Combot is a style-mimicking android in the vein of Tekken 3's wooden Mokujin. Christie Monteiro is a sexy practitioner of the Brazilian art Capoeira, which Eddy Gordo used. Marduk looks suspiciously like former WCW champion Bill Goldberg, and has a criminal past. Steve Fox is a British boxer with a Mafia hit out on him. Violet looks strikingly similar to Michael Jackson, but has definite ties to Lee. Who will win this year's tournament? It's in your hands this fall.



Namco got the memo: All fighting games need water effects



Fans look on as two goofily-dressed behemoths go at it

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE AUGUST





XBOX/PC

# STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

A BRIGHT FUTURE SET WITHIN THE DISTANT PAST

**Draped in lovely** dannel attire, the almighty George Lucas once said, "Ever since I was in film school in the '60s, I've been on a train. Back then I was pushing a 147-car train up a very steep slope - push, push, push. I pushed it all the way up, and when *Star Wars* came along in 1977, I reached the top. I jumped on board, and then it started going down the other side of the hill. I've had the brakes on ever since." That's a noble thought,

but someone should tell George that the brakes are on the left-hand side of the car. Despite Lucas' restraint, the property he once guarded so closely has recently

exploded, and the creative reigns have changed hands countless times.

Through novels, comic books, and video games, new *Star Wars* tales are conceived on what seems like a daily basis. The legendary *Star Wars* saga is now diluted and inconsistent.

Lucas won't let anybody touch the prequel area, nor will he allow anyone to tell the tale of the first meeting between Chewbacca and Han Solo, but it would seem that everything else is up for grabs.

Through a good majority of its games, LucasArts has rode on the coattails of Lucas' storytelling - a move that has recently been deemed unnecessary by the gaming masses. In all honesty, how many games can be created under the basis of a two-hour motion picture? This is a question that we hoped we'd never have to live through, yet LucasArts put it to the test. Rather than regurgitate Episode I again,

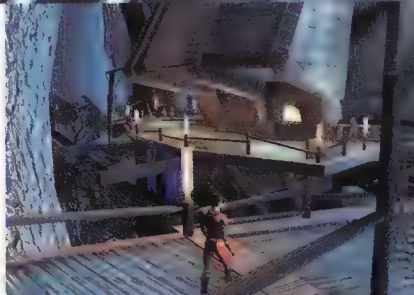
LucasArts has finally opted to create a completely original *Star Wars* property. *Knights of the Old Republic* is set over 4,000 years before *The*

*Phantom Menace*, in a time where Jedi and Sith number in the thousands. This truly is the Golden Age. Adding diversity to the pool, *Knights of the Old Republic* will also be the first single-player *Star Wars* role-playing game. BioWare is spearheading the development of this ambitious project, and if its previous works (*Baldur's Gate I and II*) are any examples of how *Knights of the Old Republic* will unfold, there's much reason to rejoice.

A massive story is in the works, but rather than have the tale unfold around a specific hero, players are granted the luxury of designing and customizing their own character. Much like the *Dungeons & Dragons* rule set, *Knights of the Old Republic* offers an incredibly complex class system that will allow players to choose between Guardian Jedi, Bounty Hunter, Scout, Smuggler, and Soldier types. The way you play the game will determine whether you are good or evil. That's right; you can join the Sith if you choose to. The entire adventure unfolds in real-time and boasts a comprehensive combat system. As your character levels up and acquires new skills, you'll have the chance to recruit a three-man party. No details have emerged as to how the party system will work, but we have a feeling each character is equipped with individual AI routines, and we wouldn't be surprised if you can switch control to them on the fly. For missions, you'll probably want to comprise a party of humans and aliens; however, droids (including astromech) can also be called upon.

Since this is a full-fledged RPG, most of the exploration is up to you. Scripted events occur frequently, but you'll have to do all the legwork. To aid in the navigation of the ever-expansive galaxy, a starship called the *Ebon Hawk* is yours to pilot. While the primary function of this vehicle is to traverse from planet to planet, you'll also have the opportunity to use its facilities to change party members and train in specific arts. As you quest, you'll need to complete missions to earn Credits that can be used to purchase weapons and items. An overabundance of minigames, like swoop races and manning turret guns, are also planned.

*Knights of the Old Republic* will release on the Xbox first, then on the PC in the spring of 2003.



In addition to Tatooine, Korriban, and Dantooline, players will visit the wookiee homeworld of Kashyyyk



Here's a look at just how detailed the worlds will be



*Knights of the Old Republic* takes place 4,000 years before Episode I and centers around the rise of the Jedi and Sith

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** BOWARE CORP ■ **RELEASE** FALL (XBOX), SPRING 2003 (PC)



XBOX

# CRAZY TAXI 3: HIGH ROLLER

CRAZY FOR TRYIN', CRAZY FOR CRYIN'

**After ports of** the three-year-old Crazy Taxi on both GameCube and PlayStation 2, it's finally time to up the loco ante yet again. The taxi is back, and this time it's using the massive horsepower of the Xbox. While we must stress that the game has only been announced for Japan release at press time, we'd gamble that it will see our shores soon enough.

Speaking of gambling, Sin City itself—Las Vegas, Nevada—is the new location for the cast of cabbies to earn their dough. There really couldn't be a better suited location, considering the wild style of this series. Vegas is infamous for just about every deviant activity in the book, and its glitz, glamour, and gratuitous nature are the stuff legends are made of. Instead of gambling for dollars, though, any unwitting tourist who steps into the vehicles of the game's four new drivers will be gambling with something more important—their lives!

As you can see from these screenshots, High Roller has grandiose casinos, each with unique gimmicks. It does not appear, however, that actual hotels have been licensed for the game. Another thing evident in the screens is that at least part of the game, if not all of it, takes place at night.

While the overall look of the game seems to be an improvement over the first two in the series, Crazy Taxi 3 doesn't seem to take full advantage of the graphical capabilities of the Xbox. Character models are still rather bland and basic, and most textures don't seem overly ambitious. Of course, there has never really been a major leap in graphics since the original release, so we won't complain much.

Mingames are a requisite feature for Crazy Taxi, and we're sure High Roller will be no different. Also returning is Crazy Taxi 2's ability to pick up multiple passengers, and deliver them to different destinations. We can only hope that the mimes will be back to holler at us from the back seat. It's probably a given that driving techniques like the jump and the Crazy Drift will resurface, but we're also keeping our fingers crossed for a few new automotive tricks.

The thought of a new Crazy Taxi has us gripping our stick shifts, anticipating putting the pedal to the metal. Hopefully, the game will reach the United States before the end of the year, so Japan won't have all the fun. In our opinion, the chances for that are better than splitting a pair of aces in blackjack. You ready to make some crazy money? Aw, yeah!

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER HITMAKER ■ RELEASE TBA







GAMECUBE

# MARIO SUNSHINE

THE SUNSHINE OF MARIO'S LOVE

**Thus far, information** about Nintendo's GameCube epic Mario Sunshine has been more closely guarded than details regarding the US's new "shadow government" or the next Guns n' Roses album. Thankfully, Nintendo bigwigs Shigeru Miyamoto and Satoru Iwata, who were on hand at the recently held DICE Summit in Las Vegas to speak on the state of the industry, have been circling the globe showing off a brand new video presentation that displayed some new gameplay footage of the upcoming blockbuster.

The video wasn't long, but it did go a long way towards demystifying Mario Sunshine, a title that has been the subject of much speculation over the past year. Overall, one gets the impression that the game will be an extension of the 3D platforming formula pioneered by Mario 64; much like Mario's SNES debut, Super Mario World, built upon the successes of the first three Super Mario Bros. releases.

One new wrinkle that has been added is the water cannon that is strapped to Mario's back, an implement that appears to be his main weapon in combating the various overgrown creatures that threaten his existence. Control looked very solid, and the video showed an agile Mario rapidly flipping and double-jumping over a landscape that erupted and split à la Maximus. He's tricky, that Mario, and we even peeped him tightrope walking over some high-hung power lines as he sprayed water in every direction. In a nod to Super Mario World, we saw some of the reversible chain-link fence sequences that were prevalent in that classic (pictured above).

So far, we aren't terribly impressed with Mario Sunshine in terms of the graphical presentation, as the game doesn't seem to represent a huge leap over the company's N64 platformers. Still, we can expect that Miyamoto is, as always, hiding the more mind-blowing aspects of his new creation from the press. Perhaps E3 will reveal the truth about Mario Sunshine once and for all.

■ **STYLE** 1 PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 26



Mario is on the run from some familiar foes



Mario's tightrope walk will require expert balance



Throughout the game, Mario will use his water cannon to rid the world of icky black sludge



XBOX

## TOTALE!

(F)OUND (O)N (R)OAD (D)EAD

**A car game, huh?** We bet you'll want to get right under the hood and tweak the Johnson rods or whatever. Well (twak this: After a spin through TotalE!, you'd be lucky to even pry the hood off the twisted crumple zones that used to be your front end. You don't need a mechanic; you need a welder.

Sure, TotalE! has no rods, and classic cars do their way, they'll end up bursting into flames like a Ford Pinto once they blaze through the title's 16 different game types. Sometimes you'll chase around a target car; other times, you'll have to perform stunts for points and the approval of the crowd. Either way, TotalE! is consistent in its pursuit of a bashing good time: It's complete with a damage system that includes twisted fenders, doors, and broken glass. TotalE! might not be able to compete with Twisted Metal: Black, but perhaps its variety of modes and rush-ups will make it fun in its own right.

Amidst all the demolition lies some beauty. Dirt, textures, and lens flare, and glass reflections are just some of the finer points that spruce up the game. We've also witnessed all this while almost a dozen other competitors were speeding and crashing around us at 60 frames per second. It seems the only thing missing from TotalE! is a fleet of ambulances chasing personal injury lawyers.



This is a classic car show with a vengeance

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4 PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ARCON ■ **DEVELOPER** RAGE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE



## PREVIEWS



XBOX

# BRUCE LEE: QUEST OF THE DRAGON

ENTER THE QUEST OF THE DRAGON

**Bruce Lee fans** will no doubt start rejoicing at the thought of their beloved hero gracing Xboxes the world around. Bristling with features, the digital form of Mr. Lee will likely wow audiences for months on end starting this fall. Thirty lush, 3D environments set in real-world locations like San Francisco and Hong Kong are being feverishly worked out by Ronin Entertainment, who is promising multiple opponent engagement, an enemy lock-on targeting system, and 30 different types of antagonists who will work together to surprise, surround, and ambush you. To help you on your quest to find your father and the missing Golden Relic, more than 100 Jeet Kune Do moves will be part of your arsenal, all of which were motion-captured from Bruce Lee's best student.

Among the more notable features to be incorporated into Quest of the Dragon is the Move Upgrade system. Utilizing a token system that rewards players for defeating enemies, players can redeem them for move upgrades, or purchase completely new actions. We're hoping that a good balance can be reached between the brawler and one-on-one gameplay styles that Ronin will be incorporating; but whatever happens, we'll be yelling "Hlee-yah!" right along with anyone else.



"My favorite color is yellow"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE STUDIOS  
 ■ **DEVELOPER** RONIN ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FALL



PLAYSTATION 2

# THE LOST

DROPPIN' THE H-BOMB

**You come to** as the stench of sulfur hits your nostrils like a heavyweight boxer. Dazed, you pick yourself up and look around. It takes time for your eyes to adjust to the dim light. The squeaking sound of gears makes you turn around, as something inside tells you to be afraid. A twisted, mangled heap of flesh and metal stands before you. Your soulless body is riddled with bullets. He is a Turret, and you are in hell. Have a nice day.

Irrational Games and Crave have been so quiet about *The Lost* that we thought they...well, lost it. A few specters of death appeared at our doors recently, though, to assure us that the morbid tale we saw at last year's E3 is undead and well. While our initial gameplay impressions were positive, the title's visuals were almost more grim than the plot of

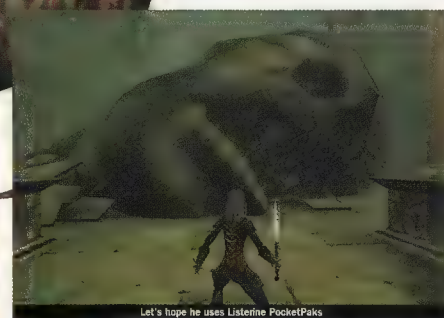
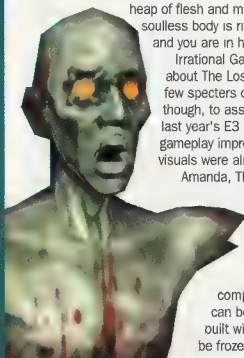
Amanda, *The Lost*'s main character, who enters the bad side of the afterlife via suicide to try to rescue her daughter.

Thankfully, this macabre story remained intact, but the graphics have been totally redone.

Hell's nine sins (environments) comprise many things in *The Lost*. They can be run-down train stations, seemingly oiled with sinewy remains—that's Wrath. They can be frozen wastelands of torment—also known as Betrayal. This hell is not your

typical fiery brimstone affair, but a deceitful, intelligent, cruel abomination modeled after Earth.

Equally as varied are the horrifying denizens of these places, which the game's four playable characters will all dispatch in their own unique idioms. The protagonists each have special attacks that can be upgraded by saving the souls of *The Lost*, who are suffering spirits not meant for damnation. If you want stealth, the scavenger Shadow is your man. For straight-up demon massacre, the best bet is the sexy Instinct. This game lets you have it your way, baby. But make no mistake about it—you're in H-E-double hockey sticks.



Let's hope he uses Listerine PocketPaks

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CRAVE ■ **DEVELOPER** IRRATIONAL GAMES  
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE





GAME BOY ADVANCE

# MAGICAL VACATION

## TWO TICKETS TO PARADISE

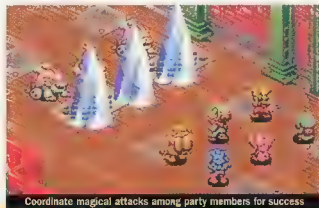
**Sooner or later,** all things must pass. A few years ago, before the Game Boy Advance had even been released in Japan, news came down that some ex-Square employees had banded together to form a development company named Brownie Brown. This unusually named outfit signed with Nintendo to create a title for the console. At that early stage, the priorities had already been set. Dubbed a "communication RPG," Magical Vacation was going to represent new territory for the as-yet-unreleased system. At the time, such statements were too vague to conjure up anything more than hopes and wishes. Now with the release of the game in Japan and a commitment from Nintendo of America to send it our way, it looks like Magical Vacation will fulfill several of its promises.

Although not truly revolutionary, Magical Vacation's multiplayer aspect is notable simply because on any system, an RPG involving more than one person is rare. Of course, two famous examples are Secret of Mana (SNES) and Legend of Mana (PS-X). Well, guess what? Brownie Brown's staff had a hand in those games. The title's "communication" aspect expands from playing with a

friend into a whole story and battle system that shuffles in and out 15 other compatriots.

You are a pupil in a magic school. An outing goes horribly wrong, however, and your classmates are scattered throughout the mysterious Plane of Light. It is up to you to find them all. Battle parties are comprised of six characters—three in front and three in back. How well you coordinate your magical attacks with others is important in Vacation's real-time combat. Each person is assigned one of 16 Spirits. You must mix and match these to pull off combo attacks that increase exponentially in their ferocity. Get a Link Cable buddy along and you can be privy to special magical powers and strategies.

Visually, Magical Vacation is a classic RPG fan's dream. Complemented by a vibrant color palette and real-time lighting, this title features characters whose notable looks are matched only by their personalities. Not that it needed much else to stand out. But even faced with a steadily improving field of GBA role-playing games, Magical Vacation still sets itself apart.



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** BROWNIE BROWN  
■ **RELEASE** 4TH QUARTER

## PREVIEWS



GAMECUBE

# LOST KINGDOMS

RIGHT NEXT TO THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD OF MAKEBELIEVE

**Activision brought** one of the first role-playing games to the PlayStation 2, in the form of Orphen. Unfortunately, it blew. Activision is now trying to match that same timeliness, but up the quality ante with Lost Kingdoms, an action/RPG for GameCube.

The game's goal is to collect Guardian Cards, which feature over 100 different creatures including dragons, skeletons and Little Shop of Horrors-esque carnivorous plants. These minions will aid the main character, the hottie Princess Katia, in battle against a world-threatening evil. You can even throw down in multiplayer against other card-carrying members.



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RPG  
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** FROM SOFTWARE  
■ **RELEASE** MAY 15

# PHOTOPHILE

GAME BOY ADVANCE

## SHINING SOUL



Sega's legendary turn-based strategy series is heading to the Game Boy Advance. Before you scoff at the idea of this title on a handheld, take into consideration it supports simultaneous four-player gameplay. Of course, to use your own characters, all four people must have their own Shining Soul cartridges. For fans of Genesis and Saturn games, the artwork is pencilled by Yoshitaka Tamaki (Shining in the Darkness, Shining Force), and the character classes consist of human fighters, human mage, dragonlayer, and elven archer. Shining Soul should appear on retail shelves before the end of the year.

XBOX

## TEKKI



At last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the thunder behind Microsoft's voice came courtesy of Capcom. This highly-touted Japanese developer confirmed that Dino Crisis 3, Gemma Orimashia, and a mysterious game entitled Brainbox would all be Xbox exclusives. To no surprise whatsoever, Capcom opted to change the name of Brainbox to the more appropriate title, Tekki (translating to Iron Knight). Within this mech simulator, players pilot bipedal monstrosities called Vertical Tanks. If you always felt that the standard console controllers didn't do justice to mech games, prepare to be blown away. Tekki makes use of a specially designed controller that features roughly 40 buttons, three pedals, two flight sticks, and tons of switches and dials. Why not just build a mech for people to walk around in? This controller is enormous, and we're certain the price point will be as well. Will Capcom bring this obscure game stateside? Possibly. As for now, Tekki's fate is still up in the air.

XBOX/PC

## TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD



The Rainbow Six line has sold more than 6.7 million copies worldwide, and the series should continue to gain momentum with the release of Raven Shield. Developed by Ubisoft's Montreal studio for the Xbox and PC, Raven Shield taps into the power of the next-generation Unreal engine and delivers 15 heart-pounding missions. Focusing strongly on tactical combat, the objectives at hand are quite diverse, ranging from the discovery of biological weapons to an armed robbery at a London bank. Both versions of Raven Shield are being developed simultaneously and should be released this fall.



XBOX

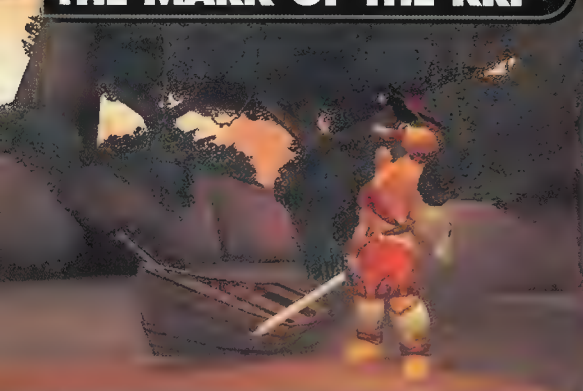
## KUNG FU CHAOS



Microsoft has enlisted the expertise of UK developer Just Add Monsters to aid in combining chop-socky with Super Smash Bros. In this kecky kungfu, a cast of martial arts actors jockey for camera time as a greedy director morphs classic film sets with cheesy karate. Forced scrolling and four-player support bring the fighting to a fevered pitch. Throw punches, taunts, preps, and even your opponents to ensure that your mugs gets plastered all over the silver screen. Lights, camera, ass-kickin'!

PLAYSTATION 2

## THE MARK OF THE KRI



If you couldn't get enough of Dark Cloud and ICO, Sony Computer Entertainment America has another innovative action/adventure in the works. While details are scarce at this point, we have learned that The Mark of the Kri is being developed by Sony's San Diego studio, and will feature a completely original and highly complex combat system. Players will assume the identity of a ferocious warrior named Rau, who can call upon a large black bird to do his bidding. Giving gamers a little something to chew on before the holidays, The Mark of the Kri is currently slated to release on the PlayStation 2 this summer.

PHOTOPHILE

GAME BOY ADVANCE

## LILO AND STITCH



Here's a platformer with a little attitude! Lilo and Stitch is based on the Disney film of the same name which finds Lilo (a Hawaiian native) adopting a stitch, who she thinks is just a dog. He's actually a space criminal! Can you believe that? Take control of Stitch as he gets into all sorts of misadventures sometime this summer, courtesy of Disney Interactive.

PLAYSTATION 2

## WAY OF THE SAMURAI



This June, it's more sword slashing from Acquire, the makers of Trench. Co-developed with Spike, Way of the Samurai explores the intricacies of these lost warriors through a roster of 200 moves. Master different swords so you can move like a butterfly and sting like a bee-ess molo. Unlike fellow PS2 title Kung Fu, you can face multiple opponents at once, although multiplayer mode features traditional head-to-head combat.

GAMECUBE

## ZOOCUBE



I cube. You cube. We all cube for ZOOcube - on GameCUBE! Puzzle games have been few and far between on the new breed of consoles, but here it is! Acquire and developer PuzzleKing to open up the genre once again. In ZOOcube's 3D world, animals are being mutated at an alarming rate. Armed only with your wits and the ZOOcube itself, it's up to you to set things right, and help the critters make it back to the flying ark. Now you know why people don't play puzzle games for the storyline. A GBA version is also in the works, with both releasing mid-May.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

## PRO RACE DRIVER



This June, Codemasters will usher in the birth of the carPRD on next-gen systems. Aside from some kick-ass, TOCA-inspired driving thrills, gamers get to follow the story of Ryan, an aspiring racer destined to win the championship, despite both his dad's death, and stiff competition from his older brother. The dramatic story unfolds through clever cutscenes with motion-captured actors. PRD doesn't skimp on gameplay, though – licensed cars will experience full damage; and adaptive difficulty tailors itself to your performance, while also giving each driver his own personality.

GAMECUBE

## WRESTLEMANIA X8



THQ's newest game featuring its WWF license is shaping up to be the best one yet. We had the opportunity to get hands-on time with the title due for summer release, and all our dreams for a great-playing engine seem to have been realized. Our fire was further fueled with visual proof of appearances by the Hurricane, Booker T, Lance Storm, and RVD. Adding to the already impressive roster is the promise that Hollywood Hogan, Scott Hall, and Kevin Nash – the founding fathers of the nWo – will also be playable. Toe sweetest!

XBOX

## CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE



Console flight combat, as a genre, has been picking up speed lately, thanks to next-gen technology and crafty design. *Crimson Skies*, formerly a PC mainstay, is now hitting the Xbox with enough G-force to make your chest cavity explode. The 1930s storyline features a dashing pilot, whose travels through interactive environments bring about daring escapes and battles to save. Multiplayer will have you and a pack of your dogs fighting it out. Biplane, yes; but we like it, too.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

## DARKBLACK



As the name would imply, *Darkblack* is shrouded in a veil of secrecy. The horrifying first-person shooter, being carefully crafted by a company who goes by the name of Darkblack, will incorporate puzzles and NPC interactivity with plain old gunplay to weave a macabre tale of shivers, groans, and entrails. The engine is said to give Red Faction's morphing Gao Mod engine a run for its money. There's no official release date set, so watch your back – you never know when *Darkblack* will sneak up and say, "Boo!"

XBOX

## SNEAKERS



Awesome! The Robert Redford, Dan Akroyd, and River Phoenix sabotage thriller is coming to Xbox! Oh, wait – this game is about a horde of mice getting into comic mischief, you say? Hm...that's a different story altogether. Originally released in Japan as *Nezumi*, *Sneakers* puts you in a human world, but as proportionately minuscule vermin. You'll need to be cunning and clever to survive the larger-than-life environments. Xbox gamers will be squealing it with *Sneakers* this Christmas.



PLAYSTATION

## C-12: FINAL RESISTANCE



The PlayStation hasn't aged well. Sony promised it would continue to support this console, but as of late, the only software being released are hard-core titles and Disney games. In July, Sony is finally upholding its original statement. C-12: Final Resistance specifically targets hardcore gamers and adults. With gameplay stylized in a Synthwave Filter vein, and a plot that can best be described as a Terminator clone, C-12 is sleeping up quite nicely. Of equal interest, the creators of the wildly popular MediEvil series are developing C-12 at SCEE's Cambridge Studio.

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE

## BLACK &amp; BRUISED



With EA's Knockout Kings still holding the title of realistic boxing game champ, Argon Interactive is taking a different route to video game pugilism with Black & Bruised, a cel-shaded, outrageous, arcade boxing title. Developed by Digital Fiction, this game uses the analog sticks much like a puppeteer uses a marionette's strings. It also features humorous and emotion-filled expressions. Still not curious? How about being able to select between first and third-person perspectives, and watching post-match FMV? Throw in the towel; you know you want it.

PLAYSTATION 2

## TRIBES: AERIAL ASSAULT

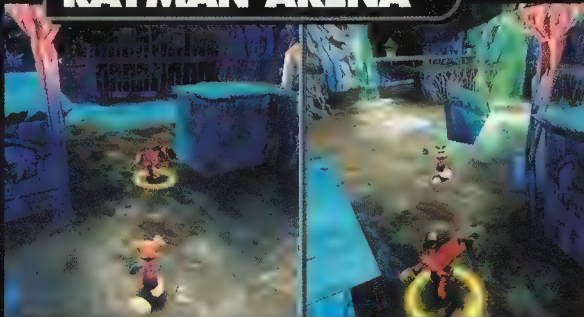


Working under the notion that gamers can never get enough of a good thing, Sierra is bringing the popular Tribes franchise to the console. With its rail-blazing action and tactical possibilities, Tribes: Aerial Assault has been slated to be one of the titles which will accompany the launch of Sony's North American online network in August.

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX/PC

## RAYMAN ARENA



Rayman, Globox, and all their friends and adversaries are back, and this time they're in direct, one-on-one competition with each other. Rayman Arena's gameplay is split between Mad Dash-style footraces through platformer environments, and gladiator-esque battles – each featuring 12 different levels. Up to four players can duke it out for bragging rights in late May – except the Xbox version which won't be out until October, but will feature online play.

XBOX

## QUANTUM REDSHIFT



If you can't join 'em, beat 'em! Microsoft, without a Wipeout or Extreme G to count on, is bringing its own futuristic racing game to the Xbox. Developed by Curly Monsters (the UK game designers, not the hairs your roommate leaves on the soap), Quantum Redshift shows you how people 100 years in the future will get fast and furious. With a lightning-game competition style and relevant cutscenes, characters are the main focus of the game – which is being worked on by the peeps responsible for Wipeout. Speed is far from ignored, though, as five different settings and speeds up to 650 miles per hour can be earned. Zoom!

# REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

## THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

**10** – Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

**9** – Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

**8** – Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

**7** – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

**6** – Limited appeal. There are always a few people that will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

**5 & BELOW** – Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

### CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

### GRAPHICS

How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

### SOUND

Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

### PLAYABILITY

Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

### ENTERTAINMENT

Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

### REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.



### ANDY

**Handle:** The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** In-N-Out Burger's Double Double, Finding Socks That Match, People-Watching At The Hard Rock Hotel **Dislikes:** PC Developers Who Make One Good Game And Think That Makes Them A God, My Email In Box After Being Gone For A Week **Current Favorite Games:** Virtua Fighter 4, Super Mario Advance 2, EverQuest: Shadows Of Lucin, Stuntman

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "pippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

### REINER

**Handle:** The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Sports **Interests:** Comic Books, DVD Movies, My Adorable Little AI Character in Virtua Fighter 4 **Dislikes:** The Fact That My Adorable Virtua Fighter 4 Character Is A Complete Moron Who Lost 100 Matches In A Row!! **Current Favorite Games:** All-Star Baseball 2003, Virtua Fighter 4, Star Wars: Jedi Outcast

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 560 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



### MATT

**Handle:** The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure **Interests:** The Jamie Kennedy Experiment, Blender Magazine, My New Television, Tron: The Langley Schools Music Project **Dislikes:** ODB's Jailhouse Mafioso, Not Having Cable, The Disappointing Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back DVD **Current Favorite Games:** Max Payne (Xbox), Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.

### KRISTIAN

**Handle:** The Game Dawg **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** The Wheel Of Time Series, Gordon's Breaded Fish Fillets, Charles Dickens, The NCAA Final Four, The New Transformers Comic **Dislikes:** Plumbing Repair, Ice Storms, Parallel Parking, Any Movie With Julia Stiles In It **Current Favorite Games:** Star Wars: Jedi Outcast, Madden NFL 2002 (Xbox), Smoof

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.



### JUSTIN

**Handle:** The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Platform, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Sledding Skeleton-Style, Seeing WrestleMania X8 From A Luxury Box, Bort License Plates, Anthrax **Dislikes:** Misplaced Birth Certificates, Tough Turkeys, Biased Boxing Refs, Our Office's Lack Of Plastic Forks **Current Favorite Games:** Deus Ex: The Conspiracy, Virtua Fighter 4, Final Fantasy Tactics, State Of Emergency

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He moonlights as wrestler Justin Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Though the youngest on staff, Justin's tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.



### KATO

**Handle:** The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** The Larry Sanders Show, The Langley Schools Music Project, Classic Krusty (With The Nehru Jacket), Exile On Main Street **Dislikes:** Staring At Your Record Collection And "Not Having Anything To Listen To," David E. Kelly **Current Favorite Games:** Deus Ex: The Conspiracy, RedCard 2003, Rygar (New And Old), Robotcod

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at his reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.



## NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

**action** - A term we use for games like *Zone of the Enders* and *Gauntlet*.

**adventure** - A term we use for games like *Myst* and *Escape From Monkey Island*.

**AI** - Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent.

**board** - A term we use for games like *Jeopardy!* and *Mano Party*.

**bobab** - Pathetic fanboy.

**bump-mapping** - A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures.

**CG** - Computer-Generated graphics.

**E3** - Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games.

**fighting** - A term we use for games like *Street Fighter* and *Dead or Alive*.

**FMV** - Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene.

**FPS** - Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like *Doom*, *GoldenEye*, & *Unreal Tournament*.

**frame-rate** - The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement.

**frontend** - A game's menus and options.

**GBA** - Game Boy Advance.

**GBC** - Game Boy Color.

**GC** - GameCube.

**isometric** - Three-quarters top down view, like *StarCraft* or *Red Alert 2*.

**ISP** - Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet.

**jaggies** - Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight.

**LAN** - Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay.

**mini-game** - A small, simple game within a larger one.

**motion-capture** - Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap.

**motion blur** - Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed.

**N64** - Nintendo 64.

**NES** - Nintendo Entertainment System.

**platform** - A term we use for games like *Super Mario* and *Crash Bandicoot*.

**pop-up** - When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear.

**PS2** - Sony PlayStation 2.

**PSX** - Sony PlayStation.

**particle effects** - Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time.

**puzzle** - A term we use for games like *Tetris* and *Chu Chu Rocket*.

**racing** - A term we use for games like *Gan Tsurimo* and *Mano Kart*.

**RPG** - Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior*.

**shooter** - A term we use for games like *Mars Mission* and *Gradius*.

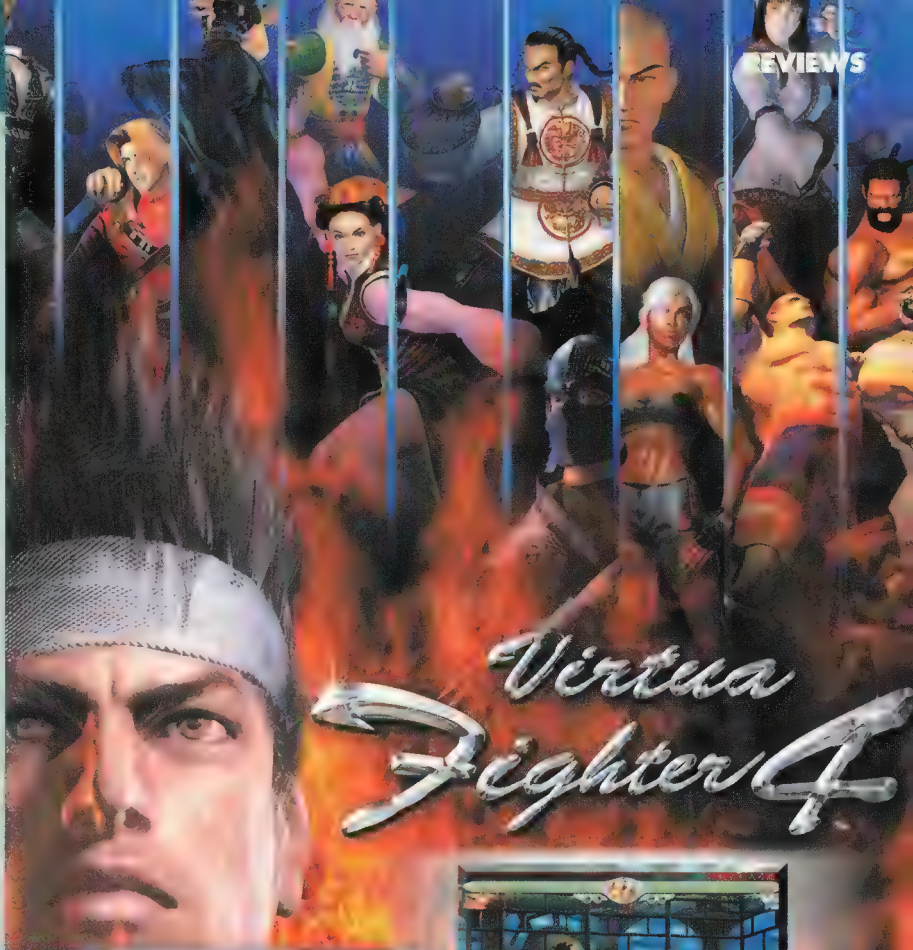
**SNES** - Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

**sports** - A term we use for games like *Madden NFL*.

**strategy** - A term we use for games like *Command & Conquer* and *Fallout Tactics*.

**third-party** - Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer.

## REVIEWS



### GAME OF THE MONTH

## VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

Many speculated that the death of the arcade scene would also bring about the demise of fighting games. Instead of throwing in the towel, developers are reworking the fighting game formula to connect with the console market. In many ways, fighting games are more alive now than they ever have been. Through countless innovations and incredible technologies, *Virtua Fighter 4* is evidence of this, forever changing the face of the fighting game market. From the flawless play mechanics to the unique character development, *Virtua Fighter 4* is at the top of its class, offering more than enough for everyone to sink their teeth into. **Page 78**







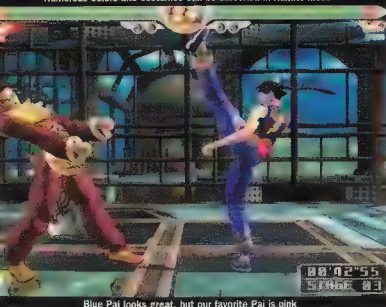
SELECT BUTTON : SAVE REPLAY FILE



You might notice that neither of these guys is the sumo guy, Taika-Arashi. He is no longer in the game



Numerous colors and costumes can be unlocked in Kumite mode



Blue Pai looks great, but our favorite Pai is pink



PLAYSTATION 2

# VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

## 3D FIGHTING AT ITS BEST

**V**irtua Fighter 4 is a testament to how far the series has come since its introduction in 1993. In these nine years, only five new characters have been added to the original lineup (including two for this installment); but the graphics, gameplay depth, and artificial intelligence have made astounding leaps forward.

Visually, the improvements are obvious from the moment you turn it on. The user interface, character models, and 3D backgrounds reach a level of detail and polish that few games ever attain. Every fighter features animated clothing, hair, and even articulated fingers. Every arena showcases some sort of visual eye candy – be it deforming sand and snow, a fully animated mob of fight hungry fans, or just a simple pool of water that splashes particle-happy droplets all over the screen.

For all the wonderful things Virtua Fighter 4 has to offer graphically, that is not the reason to buy this game. Underneath its silky shine is a feast of fighting goodies that will change everything you have ever come to expect from this genre.

Much like picking a career mode team in a sports game, you must first choose a fighter, assign a name, and then save him or her to your memory card. Now, if you select this character when you play, not only will it keep your win and loss statistics; it will also keep a detailed data file of your strengths and weaknesses. Plus, it tracks the items and titles you can unlock in Kumite mode – Virtua Fighter 4's crowning achievement.

In this amazing mode, you must climb the ranks against a seemingly endless stream of fighters. Much like the World Tour mode in Street Fighter Alpha 3 or the Mission Mode in Soul Calibur, your combatant gains levels (and titles) as you defeat opponents and unlock items that you can use to customize your avatar.

This is where the longevity in VF4 resides. As you climb the ranks, the artificial intelligence of the CPU opponents increases exponentially and you soon find yourself facing off with some amazingly skilled kung-fu masters that demand every ounce of gaming skill you can muster. In fact, the last 20 fighters (titled High Kings) that you must

face are actually modeled after the top VF4 players in Japan.

As if this mode wasn't enough to make you run out and buy Virtua Fighter 4, there is yet another innovation that pushes it over the edge. To help the player understand and explore the expansive artificial intelligence, you can also create a data file for an AI-controlled character that you can train and then unleash in the various game modes. I quickly became just as addicted to growing my own fighter as I did to playing the game myself. You can't even begin to imagine how proud I was when I left my AI fighter on overnight and woke up to learn that the little fella had graduated to 7th Dan.

Certainly, some could argue that, graphically, this conversion doesn't live up to its arcade counterpart or the Xbox-powered Dead or Alive 3; but that's just nitpicking, isn't it? Once you see the silky smooth animation in motion, with the leaves blowing past you as you knock heads with some of the most advanced AI fighters the gaming world has ever seen, you'll fall in love with Virtua Fighter 4 just as I have.

—ANDY



■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER AM2 ■ RELEASE MARCH 20

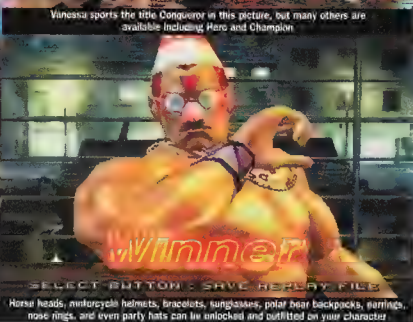
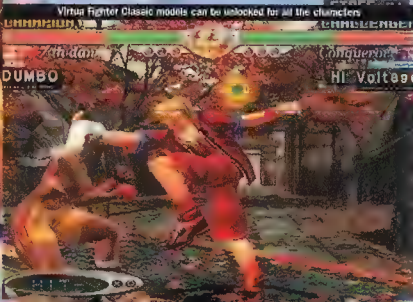




## GAME OF THE MONTH VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



"Underneath its silky shine  
is a feast of fighting  
goodies that will  
change everything  
you have ever come  
to expect from this  
genre."



The water arena has to be seen to be believed

Horse heads, motorcycle helmets, bracelets, sunglasses, polar bear backpacks, earrings, nose rings, and even party hats can be unlocked and outfitted on your character

### THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
ESRB  
9.75

- **Concept:**  
Make a 3D fighting game so good, there is no way you cannot buy it
- **Graphics:**  
Simply the best character models and backgrounds a fighting game has produced on the PlayStation 2
- **Sound:**  
If the fighting doesn't get your blood pumping, the soundtrack will
- **Playability:**  
The most balanced 3D fighter ever made
- **Entertainment:**  
The Arcade mode alone would have made for an impressive game, but the addition of Kumite and the AI characters make it absolutely impossible to resist
- **Replay Value:**  
High

### SECOND OPINION

With each passing release, the Virtua Fighter series continues to grow with leaps and bounds. Storylines and CG endings are still noticeably absent, yet infinite depth rears its head through the vast array of play options. Within Kumite mode, players must create their own character and compete to improve their ranking—a system similar to boxing or sumo. As your status improves, new garments become available and a wide variety of different opponents (with drastic costume alterations) continue to appear. Once you get started, turning off the game is next to impossible...especially if your character is a trainable AI bot. Much like a virtual pet, you can act as a mentor and teach a character how to fight. It sounds silly, but it couldn't be more addictive. Of course, VF's fighting mechanics are in a class of their own, excelling in every aspect possible. Simply said, it doesn't get much better than this.

REINER — 9.5



PLAYSTATION 2

# DEUS EX: THE CONSPIRACY

THE CEREBRAL ASSASSIN

"Is there depth  
and brilliance  
in [Deus Ex]?  
You're damn  
right there is."

One thing that concerned me about the next-generation systems was that companies would make too many PC-ish games for them. After playing Deus Ex, that's something I actually look forward to now, rather than fear.

First-person shooters on the consoles are great for a cathartic experience. Had a bad day? Angry at your boss? Pick up Halo or Red Faction and blow off a little steam. This came at a price, though. It's always seemed that there's a thinking element that hasn't quite been tapped. Sure, most FPSs give you missions to follow, but none are nearly as open-ended and thought provoking as Deus Ex.

Every action you take affects your game. If you walk into the women's restroom, you'll be reprimanded by your superior. If one of your allies dies, it'll shave points off your end-of-mission payday. This breeds you to be a smarter soldier, since mistakes are costly. You can't just flee the scene and come back in expecting things to be normal, either. If you retreat because you tripped an alarm, you'd better find another way, because the enemy is on to you.

Exploration isn't just encouraged in Deus Ex—it's all but mandatory. There is always more than one way to do things. For example, one mission has you infiltrating a terrorist-filled

area. You can go in head-on, or take a side route. That side route can be entered either by going through a grate, or getting a passcode from a starving kid. Is there depth and brilliance in this? You're damn right there is.

Deus Ex may be one of the first FPS games with this many RPG elements. The previously mentioned exploration often leads to gaining experience points, as do many other merit-worthy activities main character JC Denton does in the game. With these, you can level-up his skills, making him a superior sniper, hacker, lockpicker—hell, even swimmer! This allows you to truly tailor the gameplay to your own style.

None can deny that Deus Ex is showing its age. While some of the models are decent, the overall look of the game is a murky one. Even with the outdated graphics, it still has long load times, and they occur more than once per level. Attribute these things to the time that has passed since the PC version released. The audio compensates nicely for the visual shortcomings, though, with a catchy score and mood-fitting voiceovers.

Deus Ex: The Conspiracy may not look like much at first, but it's crazy deep, and a welcome change from the stereotypical console FPS. You will shoot, sneak, and—most importantly—think. —JUSTIN

## THIEVERY

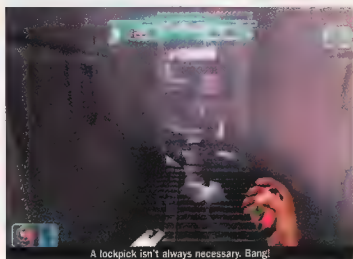
Picking locks is a great way to find new areas and attain new items. The alternate routes you discover can cut down on the amount of fighting needed, thereby saving your neck. Each door has varying lock and door strengths. Sometimes, you can just bust down the door. In most cases, though, it's best to have a lockpick handy. For the most secure strongholds, you may actually need more than one. As you build up this skill, you will increase the effectiveness of each individual lock-picking device, until you will become the video game equivalent of the Hungarian.

## HACKING

Most security systems in the game are electrical. With the handy multitool, you will be able to shut 'em down, and move right through areas. This prevents sensors from picking you up, alarms from sounding, and stops other unpleasant monitoring equipment from functioning. JC Denton is a moderately good hacker at the start, able to log into several computer terminals. With ample time, he can also patch into ATMs and the like. Also, instead of just turning off security, he can actually manipulate it, opening certain doors or turning turrets against the enemy.

## TAKING OFFENSE

Denton has different skills in all forms of combat—melee, explosives, rifle, etc. Each one can be leveled up to hone the desired skill. Not only will accuracy increase, but the actual damage the weapon causes will rise, too. With a set course of action, you can be the most deadly pistol-packer around, or master the experimental heavy weaponry like the plasma gun. While you can use them all with moderate efficiency at the start, upgrading takes a ton of points, and it's best to just focus on one specific area.







THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:**  
Give FPS fans something more to do than just shoot
- **Graphics:**  
Pretty unspectacular on the visual side of things
- **Sound:**  
Both the music and voice-overs suit the circumstances
- **Playability:**  
It's amazing how efficient the complex menus are, as well as all the ploy actions
- **Entertainment:**  
If you're cool with every second, busting caps every second, you will be enthralled with Deus Ex
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately High

## SECOND OPINION

This is an FPS that truly does give you more bang for your buck. It's the shoot-'em-up that chooses to expand itself into Metal Gear Solid 2-esque depth – and I don't say that just because there's a significant stealth aspect to it. There is not only freedom in how you approach a level, but also in your interaction with Deus Ex's world. How would I know that stealing people's candy bars was bad if I wasn't allowed to do it first? If Deus Ex's open-ended world doesn't draw you in, the story will. Also, the game's controls are smooth, rich, and well adapted to the PS2 controller. On the downside, I thought the AI could have been tightened up, and the environments are more interesting for what you can do with them, than for their looks. This game may have been around the block a few times already, but I make no hesitation in telling you to go buy it. Toilet humor, anyone?

KATO – 8.5



REVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2

# SHADOW MAN: 2 SECOND COMING

THE DEADSIDE OF GAMING

**A**lthough retrofitted with enhanced graphical technologies and innovative conceptual alterations, Shadow Man remains 64-bit at heart. The developers were obviously working with outdated tools and didn't make an effort to enhance the most crucial aspects of the game. Following in the footsteps of the original release, this sequel excels in storytelling, spinning a unique tale that is sophisticated and downright morbid. Good humor also rears its head from Mike LeRo's choice of words – which are usually accompanied by more profanity than you'll hear on an Eminem album. If you are sick and tired of the typical cookie-cutter plot lines, you may want to consider adding Shadow Man: 2 Second Coming to your library.

With this recommendation comes a warning. While the gameplay design proves to be somewhat complex and diverse, the controls are extremely sloppy. You never really get a good feeling for how the game plays, as the character movement is extremely touchy – much like hitting a puck across an air hockey table. I'm in full agreement that the gameplay should be wickedly fast, but the interaction with the character has to be rock solid. It is playable, but it feels like the character isn't tied to the environment. The innovative limb-based fighting system, which allows players to equip different weapons in each hand, is quite clever, but moreover aggravating, especially when investing a few hours of nonstop play. Whenever you jump and grab onto a ledge, you'll have to de-equip the weapons. Granted, this action requires just one press of the button, but after a heated battle, removing weapons is the last thing on your mind. It just seems unnecessary.

On the graphical front, Shadow Man doesn't light up the screen, per se, but some of the effects are decent, and the character models look fine. As for the cutscenes, I would rather have scrolling text than stare in disbelief at these horribly animated sequences.

Like I said, the storytelling is where this title shines, but the rest of 2 Second Coming basks in mediocrity. I wanted to see what obscure twists would occur, and sat in anticipation of Mike's next token saying, but it was a struggle to keep playing and stay engaged. Buyer beware. – REINER

■ **STYLE** | PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER**  
ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS TEESIDE  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 5

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:**  
The sequel to the 64-bit sleeper hit with new gameplay mechanics and hilarious spoken dialogue
- **Graphics:**  
The character models are much more realistic, and the day-to-night lighting effects are exceptional, but the texturing remains archaic
- **Sound:**  
You'll roll with laughter at Mike LeRo's witty rants
- **Playability:**  
Overly disjointed and way too floppy. You never really get a good feel for the action at hand
- **Entertainment:**  
A 30 hour quest, but do you have the desire to withstand the poor gameplay?
- **Replay Value:**  
Moderately Low

## SECOND OPINION

I somewhat enjoyed the first Shadow Man on N64, hated it on PlayStation, and came away a little disappointed by 2 Second Coming. There have been some significant improvements made over the first, especially in the inventory system, which now allows you to assign four different weapons slots (two per arm) that can be switched in and out with ease. Once again, the self-consciously silly "hardboiled" dialogue had me giggling during the cutscenes. However, aside from the slightly better character models and a few nifty particle effects, the graphics lag behind the next-gen status quo. The desire to see what cool new items and weapons await around the corner might make you want to keep playing for a while; but overall Acclaim's big bad voodoo daddy still hasn't washed off the stench of mediocrity that permeates this series.

MATT – 7.25



PLAYSTATION 2

# ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

STINK OR SWIM

**A**fter getting my hands all pruny with Ecco yet again (the original Defender of the Future, released on the Dreamcast), I would like to pat the artists on their backs... and stab the programmers in theirs. Ecco has such great, ocean-worthy graphics, but it plays so... poorly.

Ecco dumps gamers into the pruny deep, and often leaves them virtually clueless as to the next course of action. Most tasks are very platform-like in nature, but the fact that you're underwater greatly complicates matters. Saving a baby whale, catching a tricky fish, and singing songs to turtles are just some of the missions that lay ahead. Are they fun? Not usually.

Both the combat and the camera are drowning in a sea of woe. Ecco fights by thrusting his snout at enemies, and it's pretty difficult to line up your charge. When the dolphin goes above the surface, which you must do in order to refill Ecco's oxygen supply, the camera struggles more than an octopus with its legs cut off.

Defender of the Future's visuals are very good: interpretations of the world under the sea, and brought back snorkeling memories. Too bad the rest of it reminded me of nearly drowning in my neighbor's pool as a child.

JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA/ANGEL ■ **DEVELOPER** APALCOOSA ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE  
**E** 5.5

- **Concept:** One special dolphin saves our planet.
- **Graphics:** Still hold up well, with accurate depictions of underwater life, decent surface effects, and swell animations.
- **Sound:** I can only describe it as "cosmicky" and "chimey."
- **Playability:** Simple but aggravating controls and an awful camera system.
- **Entertainment:** Despite the aesthetic wonderment, Ecco definitely isn't much fun to play.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low.

## SECOND OPINION

Ecco? Heck no! I dreamt that this game had died with the Dreamcast, but then I woke up and found myself in front of my PS2, suffering through the same obtuse missions and yawn-inducing story all over again. I appreciate the gorgeous underwater environments and the game's serene sense of calm, but that only goes so far. As a dolphin simulator, this is great. As a game, it sucks.

MATT - 5



PLAYSTATION 2

# BLOOD OMEN 2

A WARM-BLOODED FEAST

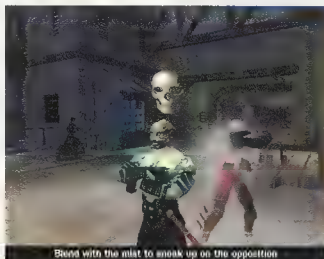
**I**f you are apathetic toward the video game maxim of assuming the role of the hero and ridding the world of evil, Blood Omen 2 is the axiom-shattering release you've been waiting for. The tables are turned; the roles are reversed; you are the ultimate destructive force and it's your obligation to rid the world of its saviors. For this fact alone, Blood Omen has secured a special place in my heart. The Mario-type of games are fun, but wouldn't it be great if you could lay waste to the land as Bowser? That's exactly what the Blood Omen games are all about - pure and utter chaos.

If you see a human in the streets, the only interaction you have with them is to take their life and use their blood to fuel your unholy exploits. Blood Omen 2 is a dark and unnerving game that will impress and worry you with how nefarious it truly can be. If you're already familiar with the series, this sequel picks up right where the isometric PlayStation RPG left off, although it's not nearly as captivating as the first entry. The transition to 3D allowed Crystal Dynamics to incorporate complex combat methods and a wide variety of different gameplay components - primarily puzzles and platforming segments. Certainly, these additions generate depth and variety, but I don't think Kain would rack his brain on how to open a door.

Along with the repulsive puzzles, the combat system is a tad shaky at times. The melee aspects are just as vicious as you would hope, but the parry system is a serious joke.



Little Red Rising Kain is soooooo cute!



Blood with the mist to sneak up on the opposition

When the characters exchange blows, it comes across like two amateurs slowly moving through a prescribed sequence. The boss battles also lack an explosive nature and are more of a test of endurance than strategy or skill. Yet, even with these drawbacks, the game manages to be entertaining, and its storytelling is a thorough feast. I have a feeling that the Legacy of Kain fans out there will enjoy this release, but will probably agree that this is the low point in the series. - REINER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE  
**M** 8

- **Concept:** The continuing story of Kain's rise to power formatted in the action/adventure vein
- **Graphics:** The gothic details lend themselves nicely to the lugubrious essence of the game. The particle effects that accompany Kain's demonic powers are awe-inspiring as well. As for the animations...well...I'll just say that robots move more fluidly
- **Sound:** Blood-gurgling screams and melodies for the dead
- **Playability:** The parry system and boss battles are foul indeed, but the general combat is quite comprehensive
- **Entertainment:** Over 30 hours of bloodsucking and puzzle solving
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

## SECOND OPINION

To Kain, kicking back with a tall cold one means draining the blood of a dead basketball player, but I love him for it. Blood Omen 2 has some rather uninspired puzzles, consisting of pulling switches or going on fact-finding missions, but the flair of the vampire and his gorgeous world are enough to entertain most any stiff. The combat, while not all that expensive, is made enjoyable through the variety of weapons and attacks each one renders. In the platform showdown, it's too close to call. The Xbox version looks minutely better, with sharper textures and character models. However, this one plays a bit better, partially based on the ergonomic design of the Dual Shock 2. Everybody wins. If the vile motif and anti-hero mentality sound like they're right up your dark alley, get your hands dirty with Kain.

JUSTIN - 8.25





PLAYSTATION 2

# ARMY MEN: RTS

CALLING ALL SARGES

As far as Army Men titles go, this one isn't so bad. There are a lot of entertaining allusions to some hard-hitting war movies, and a very thinly veiled plotline parallel to *Apocalypse Now*. The graphics are decent, and the unit handling seems to be corralled into the Dual Shock without too many problems. However, this doesn't mean that 3DO has come up with a great gameplay formula. The control of the units and structures is quite rudimentary, and the amount of tactical command you have over your forces leaves much to be desired. Of course, the Dual Shock controller doesn't lend itself very well to this genre's pinpoint demands, so it's not all the game's fault.

In terms of real-time strategy releases, Army Men: RTS is the definition of mediocrity, and as with almost every other Army Men title, the Tan Army is again the enemy. Don't these things ever die? Sarge and company have to be getting a little frustrated at this point - I know I am. - KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** PANDEMIC STUDIOS  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 27



PLAYSTATION 2

# TOP ANGLER

NOT A LUNKER, BUT FAR FROM A CLUNKER

Tastes don't get much more acquired than fishing video games, but I'm somewhat proud to put myself in the ranks of the virtual anglers. Top Angler, a barebones affair that has little in the way of depth or real strategy, nonetheless delivers a solid meat-and-potatoes (or fish and chips, in this case) fishing experience. My only criticisms concern the graphics, which look a little bit 1999 for my money, and the lack of realism. There aren't many lures to choose from, but it doesn't matter anyway, because the fish seem to like them all equally, regardless of time of day, weather conditions, or location.

This doesn't offer enough excitement to make an impact with the mainstream audience. Still, PS2 owners who like this sort of thing could do worse than Top Angler, which is even more attractive when you consider the \$30 price point and the fact that Sega Bass Fishing is still MIA from the PlayStation 2. - MATT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** XICAT INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** SIMS  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

## SECOND OPINION

When I found out I had to review another Army Men game, I grabbed a pen and contemplated impaling it into my eye. Lo and behold, however, RTS is actually a pretty slick game that delivers a fairly entertaining gameplay experience and a clever design. Certainly, it has a long ways to go yet, but it is the best Army Men game on the market.

REINER - 6.5

## SECOND OPINION

I don't like getting frustrated at AI fish. It just demeans society as a whole. Decent graphics and modes, but subpar catching techniques and biting frequency. Throw this one back.

JUSTIN - 6.25

## THE BOTTOM LINE

T  
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6

- **Concept:** An RTS using Army Men characters and other plastic things
- **Graphics:** Some nice animations and decent particle effects keep this one from being too hard on the eyes
- **Sound:** If you can stomach more hackneyed Army Men speech, you'll love what you hear
- **Playability:** This is an extremely stripped-down RTS. Veterans will probably want to wait for something better
- **Entertainment:** If you can stomach more hackneyed Army Men speech, you'll love what you hear
- **Replay Value:** Low

## THE BOTTOM LINE

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7.5

- **Concept:** Deliver solid fishing at a bargain price
- **Graphics:** Top Angler looks like a lower-tier Dreamcast game
- **Sound:** What is it with fishing games and jazzy, techno elevator music?
- **Playability:** It might take you a while to get the hang of hooking 'em, but these hungry lunkers nearly always take the bait
- **Entertainment:** Could have looked better and had more depth, but it's not bad for \$30
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

## REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

# REDCARD 2003

BLOODY HELL!

Sega tried to make a splash with Soccer Slam on the GameCube. Now it's Midway's turn, and the company has decided to separate the men from the boys. Let a 12-year-old play Soccer Slam. RedCard is better suited to the likes of Wimbledon-hardman-turned-actor Vinnie Jones.

I love how Midway has made a pretty realistic title that just happens to throw a very vicious elbow. Okay, so there's no blood, but you can't ignore getting dropped by some guy in cleats (they should've called it the Cantona Kick). You also can't overlook the dekes, through-balls, and other moves that sim-footy fans have become accustomed to. Sadly, one exception is the lack of a give-and-go pass. For shame, Midway's approach makes for an authentic soccer feel. At no time are you going to think that it's merely NHL Hitz on grass.

That still doesn't mean you can't scrap like some toothless Canadian. Nothing's better than being able to headbutt some striker in the box as he goes up for a corner kick. These abilities must be earned by filling up a meter on the bottom of the screen. Each move needs a certain amount of power to perform. This includes the awesome Super Boost Shot - which may use all of your juice, but it'll unleash a slo-mo cutscene and send the keeper flying.

The goalies could benefit from better judgement, and some might balk at not being able to make substitutions, but most of the real players on the national teams are included. So, I suggest you fire up the PS2, gather some friends, and enjoy some great hooligan roughhousing. - KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 27

## THE BOTTOM LINE

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8

- **Concept:** Midway treats soccer like you'd expect, but you may be surprised at the realistic approach that was taken
- **Graphics:** Pretty solid, and even better when portraying your special moves and attacks
- **Sound:** The best thing is how the English announcers always seem surprised when you headbutt a player off the ball
- **Playability:** I love the way the controller is mapped, allowing for fluid play without sacrificing the moves
- **Entertainment:** More fun than Soccer Slam, whether you're an enlightened fan or merely a hooligan
- **Replay Value:** Moderately high

## SECOND OPINION

Bugger all! This game is bloody brilliant! RedCard is not as far-fetched as the other games in Midway's sports lineup, but it does bend the rules over so slightly. It's basically a hyperactive simulation with finely polished and incredibly swift play. I was particularly impressed with the depth of gameplay dynamics and amazing, Matrix-styled sequences.

REINER - 8.25

## REVIEWS



### GAMECUBE

## GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY

### ARCADE DE TRIOMPHE

**G**ameCube owners, are you down? You want a bit of mindless action to occupy a few hours of your boring day? Without a State of Emergency or Maximo, you used to be SOL. Fortunately, Gauntlet Dark Legacy offers ample hacking and slashing, and it can now be yours.

This game's visuals are more a bitter pill for the eyes than a feast, and most of your time is spent jamming on the A button, but I couldn't help but enjoy Dark Legacy. The numerous levels, which have near-infinite enemy populations, challenge you to find all the items with some well-placed puzzles. I'm also a sucker for leveling up my character, though I didn't seem to kick any more ass when I was level 14 than I did at 13. Another neat aspect of the gameplay is collecting gems. Sure, this is nothing new, but there are a bunch of different colors, and the stats tell you how many you've collected out versus how many you need to unlock glory bonuses. Do I need to mention how much better it is in multiplayer? I didn't think so.

I've dished out quite a few compliments for a game I'm giving a pretty average score to, but—like I said—it doesn't look the best, and it's very much an arcade title. You'll probably get bored with it sooner than Tony Hawk 3 or Super Smash Bros. All Gauntlet Dark Legacy has to offer is fun, and sometimes that's all you need. —JUSTIN

### THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** **7.25**

- **Concept:** Fulfilling the arcade action quota for the Cube.
- **Graphics:** This series is showing its age, as the graphics are barely passable.
- **Sound:** The music is forgettable. Literally. I like the booming voice, though.
- **Playability:** The analog stick makes for easy aiming, and the combat couldn't be simpler.
- **Entertainment:** Collecting gems and gaining levels is enough to keep a couple of gamers occupied for a while.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High.

### SECOND OPINION

Just like its PlayStation 2 counterpart, Dark Legacy is all about playing multiplayer. I do find a certain joy from the single player experience (leveling characters is just so addicting), but the real entertainment is found in talking crap with your friends while you blast through the levels searching for the hidden items and solving puzzles. If you and a buddy haven't played this one yet, it's a sound investment. For those that have played Dark Legacy before, it's nothing new.

**ANDY - 7.25**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 7



### GAMECUBE

## NBA STREET

### STREETS IS WATCHING

**N**BA Street on PlayStation 2 made me turn my back on every other arcade hoops game before it. I played for hours, doing just about everything there was to do. Putting my time in with this version almost a year later, one thing still echoes in my mind: This is a kick-ass game.

Street is a three-on-three b-ball masterpiece. Ballhandlers can perform feats that put the Globetrotters to shame. Big men will mercilessly reject anything that enters the paint. Alley-oops, though—especially the double—are by far the most satisfying stunts. Each move accumulates trick points, and increases your boost meter. Fill the meter, and you can execute a Gamebreaker, which scores you points by subtracting them from your competitor.

The main mode has you taking on every franchise in the league (and some fantasy teams) with your squad. Beating a team lets you either recruit one of their guys, or enhance your created baller. You'll also unlock new courts and Jam-esque secrets. With updated rosters, Jordan's affiliation, post-game point breakdowns, and a tutorial being the only obvious changes since the PS2 version's release, it's not for gamers who already own the original. However, anyone with a pair of sneaks sho'nuff should own NBA Street. —JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS  
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 18

### SECOND OPINION

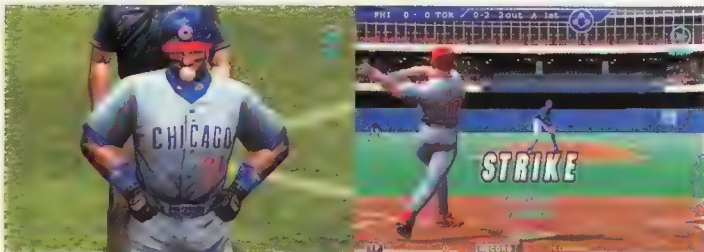
This is the most entertaining arcade-styled basketball game on the market. With incredibly smooth animations, complex moves, and competitive CPU opponents, you really can't go wrong with this release. The only thing missing is a season mode with statistical tracking.

**REINER - 9**

### THE BOTTOM LINE

**E** **9.25**

- **Concept:** Last year's arcade bball king brought to GameCube courts.
- **Graphics:** Accurately portrayed character models and kick-ass court designs. The only complaint is the spectators.
- **Sound:** Joe the Show, while he can be annoying on commentary, helps keep Street's vibe real.
- **Playability:** I miss the extra shoulder button on PS2's Dual Shock 2, but damn this game plays smooth.
- **Entertainment:** There's nothing else that even approaches the sweetness of Street in the realm of arcade sports.
- **Replay Value:** High.



### GAMECUBE

## HOME RUN KING

### GOING...GOING...GONE?

**H**ome Run King is a reminder of how dreadfully boring baseball can be. Much like a blind man navigating a maze, it's apparent that developer Wow Entertainment really didn't have a clue as to where to go with this release. Not only is the gameplay formula a complete and utter catastrophe, but the graphical details, which obviously received the most attention, are overflowing with obscure glitches and hiccups. The player models look fantastic, and the Create-A-Player is the most comprehensive out of any baseball title this year, yet Home Run King fails in delivering the essentials.

The batting/pitching interface seems complex at first, yet you quickly realize it's little more than the most confusing and useless formula conceivable. So you're telling me that I can't tell what kind of pitch I throw, and to truly be successful in hitting, I have to guess what pitch is coming? Lamel! The disgust continues through the choppy commentary, horrendous fielding AI, and lack of fantasy options. This is just bad baseball, folks. It's that simple. Invest your hard-earned cash into All-Star instead. —REINER

### SECOND OPINION

Home Run King is the most abysmal baseball game I've played in recent memory. The fielding and hitting are WORSE than my old, cracked copy of NES Baseball—seriously. Why does the third baseman run to the bag when there's a pop-up on the left side of the infield? He knows he should catch the ball...doesn't he? Hello?

**KRISTIAN - 4**

### THE BOTTOM LINE

**E** **5**

- **Concept:** Arcade-styled baseball with half of the rules and a confusing gameplay formula.
- **Graphics:** While the animation is a tad strange at times, massive amounts of detailing went into player mode's.
- **Sound:** I haven't heard commentary this choppy since the Sports Talk days.
- **Playability:** The batting/pitching interface is incredibly confusing and doesn't really convey the art of the sport.
- **Entertainment:** It offers a complete 162-game season, but getting through one game is taking enough.
- **Replay Value:** Low.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** WOW ENTERTAINMENT  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 19



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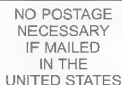
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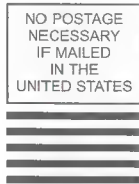


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## GAMECUBE

# JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

BOND CUBED

Judged strictly as a first-person shooter, Agent Under Fire is an able, if not entirely groundbreaking, entry. Those used to hardcore PC FPS titles like Unreal or Medal of Honor: Allied Assault (see Kristian's review of the Xbox version), won't be blown away by this game's action. They're not bad by any stretch, although the tension and difficulty doesn't really get vicious until the awesome oil derrick boss showdown. Quibbles aside, I admire Agent Under Fire for being one of the only games to really succeed at incorporating multiple gamestyle plays into one package and doing all of them well. The driving engine is nice, and the track shooter levels almost steal the show.

Compared to the PlayStation 2 version, this GameCube port has both its strengths and weaknesses. The tiny d-pad makes switching weapons a painful experience, and the real-time cutscenes did seem to suffer in places. I don't know if this is from a lack of storage space, but it really isn't too noticeable in most cases. The important thing is GameCube owners finally have a good first-person action title to call their own. Wait around for Rare to finish the next Perfect Dark sequel if you want; but if I were you, I'd take the plunge with Agent Under Fire. — **MAIT**



See what happens when you don't have a hall pass?

Stop! Hammer time!

The GameCube's four controller ports mean you'll actually use the cool multiplayer modes!

Guess don't kill helicopters, people with guns kill helicopters

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 12

## THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** **9.25**

### ■ Concept:

Combine competent first-person action with well-done track shooting and driving levels

### ■ Graphics:

I noticed a little degradation in the quality of the real-time cutscenes, but otherwise, it's identical to the others

### ■ Sound:

Plentiful voice-overs and cool variations on the Bond theme keep things proper

### ■ Playability:

There are some slight issues with weapon switching and C-stick targeting, but it's ooo as long as you change to the third preset control scheme

### ■ Entertainment:

It's not a mind-blowing FPS, but Agent Under Fire's variety and strong multiplayer elevates it above much of the competition

### ■ Replay Value:

Moderate

## SECOND OPINION

With each new James Bond game comes lofty expectations. I've been holding my breath waiting for another Bond game to rival the likes of the Nintendo 64 classic, GoldenEye, and while a solid release, Agent Under Fire comes up short. This is testament to GoldenEye's greatness. Even with a number of innovations, varying gameplay modes, and intense multiplayer battles, Agent Under Fire still doesn't have enough to dethrone the king. This isn't bad per se, but I have a feeling that if you've already played GoldenEye, you're going to expect the world. Don't let this steer you away, though. The gameplay experience does have a lot to offer — primarily the variety between the FPS, driving, and track shooting stages.

**REINER — 8.25**

## REVIEWS

## GAMECUBE

### NBA 2K2

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS  
■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 19



I've called the Xbox 2K2 gaming's best hoops, and this one keeps up the Sega Sports tradition of above-the-mid rockability. The graphics and physics are inferior to Courtside on the Cube, but 2K2 gets the nod in nearly

every other aspect. We're talking Franchise, speed, stats, etc. It's a shame Nintendo owners get this so late, but coming up big in the clutch is what great ballers do. You can't stop NBA 2K2; you can only hope to contain it. — **JUSTIN**

**E** **9**



## GAMECUBE

### SPY HUNTER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RACING  
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 12

We've come to expect a high visual mark from the GameCube, but it's not met in this case. I really liked the game itself, especially the speed, secret routes, and difficulty level, but it just looks awful and pixelated. That's even more of a shame, because it makes this new turn in the classic series look almost like some long-lost PlayStation cousin instead of a triumphant return. The Xbox's Spy Hunter code is too hot, now the GameCube's is too cold. That makes the PS2's code just right.

— **KATO**

**T** **7.5**

## GAMECUBE

### DARK SUMMIT

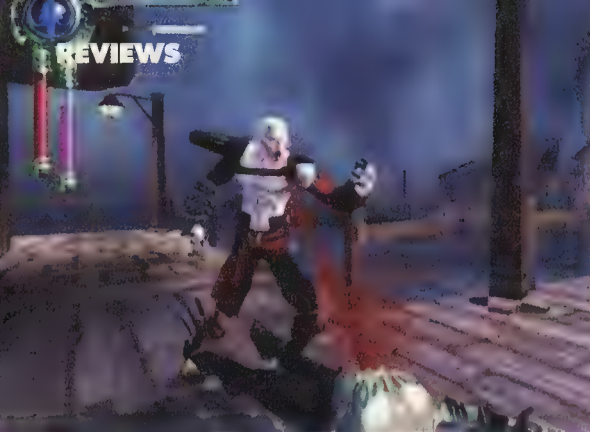
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS  
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ  
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 7



Kudos to Radical Entertainment for managing to port all of Dark Summit's gargantuan environments onto one of those teeny-tiny GameCube discs. Good job mates; too bad you didn't fix the unpunished gameplay

engine while you were at it. Although the graphics are generally good, there is still something unappealingly sluggish about this game. Dark Summit isn't bad, but I'd still rather play the flawed and abbreviated GC version of SSX Tricky instead. — **MAIT**

**T** **7**



"If the main character had been some pitchfork-wielding farmer in Iowa named Elmer, the game just wouldn't be as fun."



XBOX

# BLOOD OMEN 2

KAIN'S VAMPLIFICATION

This installment of Kain is quite different from his isometric RPG-esque roots, but such is the way of a next-gen sequel. Blood Omen 2 is your standard puzzle-solving, melee-fighting action/adventure tale, but with enough dressing and gore-fication to garner well-deserved attention.

The appeal of this game is in its attitude. I liked traversing the area of Nosgoth, and I enjoyed sucking the blood of its inhabitants. Kain is a straight-up cool character (though most vampires are), with his wry British attitude and his disdain for the human race. If the main character had been some pitchfork-wielding farmer in Iowa named Elmer, the game just wouldn't be as fun. Of course, I don't know what Elmer could've done to match Kain's sweet stealth kills, massive jumps, and nasty disposition.

Kain's not the lead meanie he is in the Soul Reaver series. Instead, he's just woken up from a 200-year nap, and his strings are being pulled by an unseen leader. This doesn't sit well with the future lord of darkness, but he goes along with it just the same, uttering a few arguments along the way. While this story is rather cheesy, the subtleties Crystal Dynamics used to take this posterboy of evil, and put him in a protagonist role, is fascinating.



What isn't quite as interesting are the constant key-finding, block-pushing, switch-turning elements of Blood Omen 2's gameplay. These are the same actions we've been doing since Tomb Raider and its hosts of knock-offs. Fortunately, as I said before, the attitude and gore kept me hooked. Kain has his own claws, but can also take the weapons of fallen foes. My favorite was grabbing the sword from a Sarafan guard, then picking up an innocent town girl and impaling her on it. Of course, blood sucking follows. Slurp, slurp, yum! Aspects like blocking, the Rage meter, and Dark Gifts are used with varying degrees of effectiveness to attempt to spice things up. It's all relatively easy to execute, though, save for the times when I had to hold the R trigger and hit X until my knuckles ached – something that doesn't occur with Sony's Dual Shock 2.

Graphically, this is definitely a pretty game. The models are great, the environments are breathtaking, and I didn't worry about the camera once. I guess it looks a lot more like a next-gen game than it plays. Still, Blood Omen 2 is a blast, moves at a decent pace, and will likely satisfy your deep, dark desires. — JUSTIN

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS ■ RELEASE MARCH 26



One Dark Gift lets Kain leap tall buildings in a single bound...



...while another lets him take the form of mist

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE

8.25

## ■ Concept:

Rip Van Kain attempts to claw his way back to the top of the food chain

## ■ Graphics:

The amount of detail that went into these environments is amazing, as well as the lead character models. It all loads in streaming fashion to boot

## ■ Sound:

Saucy Bnts and gothic hits

## ■ Playability:

Kane is missing an about face move, but everything else is gravy

## ■ Entertainment:

While Blood Omen's skeleton is one we've all played before, the skin put over it is more than enough to equal a good of time

## ■ Replay Value:

Moderate

## SECOND OPINION

Once again, Crystal Dynamics has penned a fascinating yarn that is as merciless as it is intelligent. Although the enemy animations and in-game cutscenes could have benefited from a serious technology upgrade, the detail within the environments is right where it should be. The gameplay is loaded with exciting action sequences and more than enough bloodsucking, yet the so-called "inventive parry system" is a dreadful component and an ugly piece of coding. A majority of the bosses are horrible as well. Much like the first Soul Reaver game, Blood Omen 2 suffers from the incorporation of obnoxious and highly repeated puzzles. As a whole, however, Blood Omen 2 is not nearly as invigorating as the first RPG-styled entry in the series, but I will say that it does have the appeal and unbounded wickedness to sate gamers' blood lusts.

REINER — 8





XBOX

## SPY HUNTER

SAME GAME, WORSE GRAPHICS

Since this is almost an exact port of the PlayStation 2 title, all the gameplay elements are the same. There are 14 missions to complete with varying objectives in the single player mode, and some unexciting 2-player games to pass the time if you are really bored.

While the gameplay has been replicated perfectly, the graphics aren't quite up to par with its PS2 cousin. Spy Hunter on the Xbox is much darker and not as defined—which is especially odd since the game's textures are crisper.

Environment mapping on the vehicles is also much more pronounced in this version, but I'm not saying that is a good thing. The same can be said for the increased smoke effects. I guess I was supposed to be impressed by these lackluster additions, but all I thought they did was cloud my view and detract from the gameplay.

Why this game didn't take advantage of the Xbox's capabilities I have no idea, but even with its graphical flaws, Spy Hunter is still a fun game to play. Plus, this version has the original arcade game included, which was sadly missing from the other editions. If you haven't played it yet, Spy Hunter is certainly worth a look—albeit an overly clouded and dark one. —ANDY

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING/ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** POINT OF VIEW/Paradigm ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 13



XBOX

## JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

A GENTLEMAN FIRING

I came into Agent Under Fire hoping for some good first-person shooting exploits. What I received was that and much more. This latest Bond shows the versatility of the super agent who not only roams around with his weapon-wielding hand outstretched, but also cruises around in a stylish hooptie and shoots out enemy tires from a moving vehicle.

The character models are astounding, and some of the best I've seen in this genre. The face of Bond's beauties even shake what their mamas gave them in DOA fashion. The voice of 007 exudes the nonchalant confidence that defined every movie star who stepped in his onscreen shoes. This is definitely a long way from the text bars and box-headers of GoldenEye.

Agent Under Fire's controls are up to speed with what I've come to expect from an FPS—no more, no less. I didn't like the default setting, and I doubt you will. Once I found a scheme to my liking, I was blasting, activating, and straining like an agent should. This was an area not quite so advanced since GoldenEye, but I still found little flaw. We all know Kato is the bee's knees, but everyone and their mom already has it. Put this next to Max Payne on your gun-toting time-to-buy list. —JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

### SECOND OPINION

The tint on this Interceptor's windows is too good, as the game is darker than the others. While you might want to rub that statement in the faces of your Xbox friends, this is still a good game underneath it all. It even throws in the original arcade version of Spy Hunter to boot to prove that this remake isn't a fluke.

KATO — 7.5

### THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN  
T

7.75

#### ■ Concept:

Port the PlayStation 2 game to as many platforms as possible without improvement

#### ■ Graphics:

Oddly, the Xbox port looks worse than the PS2 and GC versions

#### ■ Sound:

Even Saliva can't screw up the theme from Peter Gunn

#### ■ Playability:

The perfect mix of easy driving with machine gun carnage

#### ■ Entertainment:

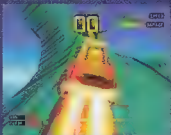
Midway didn't reinvent the wheel, but it did deliver a great experience that pays homage to the original

#### ■ Replay Value:

Moderate

## SMASHING DRIVE

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING  
■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 19



Few people can endure a car wreck and walk away unscathed. That includes me. This is my second time all the way through Smashing Drive, and despite still being a short game, I am now scared away from gripping its wheel ever again. With no significant enhancements or additions, this title makes no case for itself on the console. Xboxers will undoubtedly ask: "Why doesn't it utilize the hard drive?" and "The GameCube version looks just as good!" I've been had!" —KATO

E  
6.5



XBOX

## CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTX

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM  
■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE STUDIOS  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

To a certain extent, I commend Traveller's Tales for upholding the 32-bit legacy, but at the same time, I really want to ask them why they didn't take the game to the next level. Every little morsel of platforming goodness in The Wrath of Cortex has already been done to death on the PlayStation. While still entertaining, you just can't help crying out for something new. If you haven't played all of the Crash games, definitely take a look. This is the best platformer on the Xbox. Furthermore, if you were disgusted with the overabundance of loading times in the PlayStation 2 version, you'll be happy to hear that the level transitions in the Xbox version are almost seamless. Although not prominently displayed, the Crash model has been enhanced with fuzzy, real-time fur. This is a decent platformer that newbies should invest in, but it really does nothing for the hardcore Crash fanatics out there. —REINER

E  
7.25

XBOX

## NFL BLITZ 2002

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS  
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY  
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 12



Also, the normal Blitz rules apply. It's better to play it with quarters (i.e. in the arcade) than it is with bills (i.e. fifty singles at the store). \$50? Christ, you could pick up some old QB for the veteran minimum for that. Is Dave Craig still alive? —KATO

E  
5



GAME BOY ADVANCE

# **DRAGON BALL Z: THE LEGACY OF GOKU** THE LONG ROAD FROM RESURRECTION

**S**ome kids first find out about death through the passing of a pet. Others may find out through this game. When I first started playing, I said like it was going out of style. Hell, I even got Goku killed while trying to save Gohan from Raditz. Oh yeah, that was supposed to happen. This title's adherence to both the substance and style of the show are what kept me playing it, and I'm not even a fan.

Legacy of Goku's real-time combat is pretty simple. Your inventory/ability management isn't that involving. Sidequests are of the seek-and-find variety. No, these things aren't what kept me going. Instead, it was the need to constantly level-up (which eventually put an end to my habit of dying) while being spiced up by the humor, characters, and the story's presentation. Despite those features and the large, often maze-like levels, I found that this game rode that fine edge between being dry and repetitious, and being honestly engaging. Of course, DBZ fans are probably a bit younger than I am, and should find lots to like in Legacy of Goku. Outsiders shouldn't rule it out though. They'll probably agree with me that combat and the boss battles could have been more involving. Still, there is a morsel of strategy there. Fan or not, I think you'll find that determination may be its own reward. —**KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAVES/WIZARDWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** WEBFOOT TECHNOLOGIES ■ **RELEASE** MAY 14

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
**E** **7.5**

- **Concept:** Run through levels in the series from the capture of Gohan onward via real-time combat and sidequests.
- **Graphics:** From the opening title screen to the still frames to the characters, fans will appreciate the attention to detail.
- **Sound:** Apart from recognizing the tunes from the show, there's not much distinguishing about it.
- **Playability:** Combat is a little primitive, and the gameplay remains on a simple curve throughout the game.
- **Entertainment:** Despite its flaws, I wanted to keep playing it. DBZers will love it, and you too could find yourself initiated.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low.

## **SECOND OPINION**

While the leveling-up takes way too much precedence, it's easy to see how fans of the show will love Legacy of Goku — It's very faithful to the anime series (except for the fact that, in the beginning, cats will kick Goku's butt like nobody's business). Strategy/RPG gamers will dig it, too. It's a tad repetitive, but the wealth of sidequests and Goku's skills make up for this.

**JUSTIN — 8.5**



GAME BOY COLOR

# **SHANTAE**

RHYMES WITH ANOTHER WORD  
THAT DOESN'T MEAN GOOD

**C**apcom's new Game Boy Color game Shantae, is supposedly a "kid's game," but I don't know any kids I despise enough to make play this one. On the surface, everything seems right. You play the genie Shantae, who must recover the steam engine technology the vile pirate Risky Boots has stolen from Dr. Mima. She's armed with the ability to whip enemies with her hair, jump, and also gains the ability to do dances that transform her into various creatures with different powers. There are also a number of little Beatmania- or PaRappa the Rapper-style minigames that you must input direction and button commands to complete.

Unfortunately, the game is slightly frustrating because the enemies are fairly random and seem to come out of who knows where. Often times, I found it much easier to avoid conflict altogether and just try to run through the levels — not a whole lot of fun, if you ask me. There are a lot of adventure aspects to this game that are admirable, but, overall, the game just isn't compelling enough to keep you playing. — **ANDY**



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM  
■ **DEVELOPER** WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES ■ **RELEASE** MAY 1

**THE BOTTOM LINE**  
**E** **3**

- **Concept:** Use a sexy genie temptress to fool gamers into believing this game's good.
- **Graphics:** Fine on the Game Boy Color, but archaic if you own an Advance.
- **Sound:** Made me want to rip my ears off with a set of pliers.
- **Playability:** It's not that it plays poorly, it's that it's not fun to play.
- **Entertainment:** Watching Shantae do her best Britney Spears impersonation is about as good as it gets.
- **Replay Value:** Low.

## **SECOND OPINION**

Here's a two-word summation of this title: Kid's game. Most of you have now probably moved onto the next review, but for those who haven't, the following is what I think makes Shantae little more than a blip on the radar. First of all, this is simply a platformer featuring a girl genie with some nice animations. A few of the options for combat are interesting, and the GBA-only levels are an intriguing idea, but these qualities are too little too late when it comes to making Shantae worthy of a purchase. On a lighter note, the dance abilities your character has is a good idea. It's fun to watch her shake her booty then turn into an elephant when you want some extra help defeating enemies. I can definitely suggest this game to parents who want a clean and tidy game for Junior to play on the way up to the lake, but for everyone else out there, I'm warning you: keep your distance.

**KRISTIAN — 6**



# GAME BOY ADVANCE QUICKIES

## PETER PAN: RETURN TO NEVER LAND

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** DISNEY INTERACTIVE  
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 20

Considering that kids today can't remember a time before the Internet and cell phones, you'd think that developers would assume that they'd be able to handle GBA games that don't completely insult their intelligence. Think again. The worst part is that, for all the simplistic level goals and unimaginative gameplay, the horrible control almost manages to make this inane garbage somewhat challenging. Parents, your kids deserve better than this. Wu-Tang might be for the children, but Return to Never Land is for no one. — **MAIT**

**E** 3

## ROBOPON 2: RING VERSION

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS  
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 13

Although this Robopon sequel doesn't have the special internal clock feature of the first, this is definitely more of the critter collecting and battling that fans already love. Ring Version's look isn't greatly improved. However, a bunch of minigames have been added, as well as link play, in order to spice things up. What's the difference between this and the Cross Version? Different Robopon. "Collect 'em all" isn't necessarily the only attraction here, as it's still a decent time to be had. — **KATO**

**E** 7



## MIKE TYSON BOXING

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 12

Mike Tyson tore a chunk out of someone's ear, beat his wife senseless, and assaulted his next opponent during a press conference. His roughneck attitude actually would have been a welcome addition in this terribly weak boxing endeavor. The Career mode is overflowing with options, training sessions, news updates, and over 100 boxers; yet the gameplay is nobly at the knees and struggles in the simplest of things. While the general movement is smooth and easy to control, landing a punch is a taxing exercise, and actually knocking out an opponent is nearly impossible. As iron would have it, my Game Boy Advance and nerves received the most severe of beatings. This was a valiant attempt, but the product didn't come together as expected. The play is way too shallow and unforgiving. — **REINER**

**E** 5

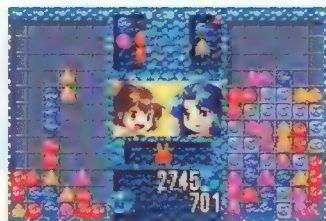
## NBA JAM 2002

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SPORTS  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM SPORTS  
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 28



"Nicely received" literally every possession, and the player stats are nowhere near accurate. Basically, there is absolutely nothing redeemable about this game. I'd rather hand-wash Patrick Ewing's sweaty game shorts, or play a game of streetball in a mini-skirt and heels, than ever set foot on Jam's court again. — **JUSTIN**

**E** 1.25



## PUYO POP

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER PUZZLE  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ/SEGA  
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 12

Puyo Pop rocks, and here's why: While Tetris allows you to work toward the elusive four-line Tetris, Puyo's combo possibilities are limitless. The goal is matching four like-colored blobs, making them disappear. Strategy comes from planning complex chain reactions, clearing bunches of pieces in one drop—dumping tons of garbage blobs on your opponent. Tee hee! Puyo Pop's story mode is well-written, and there are a handful of other modes, too. There's even auto-saving! Puyo Pop is hands-down the best GBA puzzle game thus far, and I guarantee you'll get as hooked as I did. Just remember to blink. — **JUSTIN**

**E** 8.5

## ROGUE SPEAR

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION  
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT  
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 14



Talk about an ambitious release—bringing a team-based, strategy-heavy shooter to GBA. For the most part, this lofty project hit paydirt. The main problem I have is with the multi-button pressing commands, which made me unintentionally cap a lot of hostages and commit other errors. They require a lot of memorization, as well. The strategy aspects are great, as is the audio. Rogue Spear's amped difficulty will keep you plugging away for hours. If you want reconnaissance thrills on the go, scope it out. — **JUSTIN**

**T** 7.75

## REVIEWS



## GAME BOY ADVANCE

## ICE AGE FOR THE CHILDREN

If there's a new movie heading to the big screen, there's a good chance it will eventually transform into a Game Boy Advance title. Given its immature nature, Ice Age was the perfect fit for this handheld. My score clearly shows that A2M's efforts didn't exactly pay off...but there's a catch. If you can ride a bike without training wheels, or hit a ball without a tee, then you're too old for Ice Age. This game is strictly for kids, and when I say kids, I mean the kind that may in fact still wear diapers. The smelly kind.

I managed to run through the entire game within the span of an hour. The slow learning curve is perfect for children, allowing them to become comfortable with the control and gameplay mechanics before being asked to complete more action-packed sequences. Some of the elements in this game are innovative and used quite nicely, but again, a two-fingered monkey could complete the most difficult challenges.

My midlife crisis is expressed from the adult perspective. In defiance of my harsh score, I'm sure the ruggats out there will throw a tantrum, asking why Ice Age didn't receive a perfect 10. They'll eat it up and ask for the next best thing. Which of course would be Crash Bandicoot and Super Mario Advance.

In closing, if you're a parent who wants to get a child started on video games, Ice Age is the perfect primer. I'd also like to reiterate the fact that the GBA is the only system on the market that offers an extensive library of titles targeted at the gaming youth. — **REINER**

## THE BOTTOM LINE

**E** 6

■ **Concept:** Based on the feature film of the same name, Ice Age is a solid platformer, but the lackluster difficulty makes it a game only for kids.

■ **Graphics:** The animations are quite crude, but there are some nice details and colors expressed within the scrolling backdrops.

■ **Sound:** Dull monotone effects and happy-go-lucky tunes.

■ **Playability:** Some of the play mechanics are original, and the forced scrolling stages deliver a moderate difficulty, but the majority of the game is light on challenge and could possibly be conquered with both eyes closed.

■ **Entertainment:** If you still suck your thumb or are just learning how to use the groundy potty, Ice Age is right up your alley.

■ **Replay Value:** Low.

## SECOND OPINION

With crisp graphics, some average-to-good level designs, and solid gameplay mechanics, Ice Age isn't half-bad. And when it comes to GBA platformers based on animated movies, that's all good. Adults shouldn't go near it, but it will make a nice diversion for the six-year-old in your life.

**MAIT — 6.75**

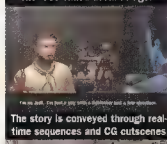
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** FOX INTERACTIVE/UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** A2M  
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 12



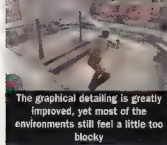
"Jedi Outcast is the most enjoyable and accomplished Star Wars game yet."



"Like, get a haircut already! The '80s ended decades ago!"



The story is conveyed through real-time sequences and CG cutscenes.



The graphical detailing is greatly improved, yet most of the environments still feel a little too blocky.

PC

# STAR WARS: JEDI OUTCAST

THE STRONGEST JEDI OF THEM ALL

**R**unning on a highly modified Quake III: Team Arena engine, and developed in collaboration with Activision subsidiary Raven Software, Jedi Outcast emerges as the quintessential Star Wars game and a feast for all FPS devotees. The fact that Jedi Outcast is a respectable Star Wars title is one thing, but declaring that it has the depth and sheer gameplay power of a Medal of Honor or Unreal is testament to its fine craftsmanship.

Historically, the Jedi Knight series has excelled in numerous ways, primarily in the delivery of intense first-person entertainment. Mowing down waves of stormtroopers never seems to get old. At the same time, however, I've never been particularly fond of the Jedi elements. Wielding a lightsaber and propelling Force powers is a great concept, but it's never really come across as an integral or polished aspect of this series. Within this sequel, the Jedi antics have received the most treatment and no longer feel disjointed. In previous editions, players had to determine whether they would tap into the light or dark side of the Force. This time around, you can freely command both, and I can't even begin to describe how vital and ingenious this aspect is. You can pull a weapon out of an enemy's hand, soar 30 feet into the air, run on walls (yes, it's as cool as it sounds), squeeze your fingers to choke the

opposition, and even propel lightning blasts from your fingertips. The lightsaber melee battles are still formatted around the standard FPS controls, but the movement is much tighter and the computer AI harbors the true essence of realism. While drastically improved, the game is still in dire need of an auto lock-on option. Some of the lightsaber attacks are a tad difficult to use, mainly because they require the simultaneous pressing of three keys.

The gameplay has finally reached a suitable balance, and the storytelling is just as engrossing as it has always been. This time around, I wasn't overly enthused with the structure of the missions. Yes, there are more objectives to complete; and yes, more variety has been included; but instead of focusing on the battles, the game has a tendency to rely on puzzles and platforming segments way too much. Jumping in an FPS is a challenge in itself, but completing do or die leaps is a God-like feat. The hook that kept me coming back, though, was the online multiplayer. With tons of modes and unique level maps, up to 32 lightsaber-wielding players can swarm the battlefield. It's a highly addictive, over-the-top experience that all FPS players must see to believe. Without question, Jedi Outcast is the most enjoyable and accomplished Star Wars game yet. — **REINER**



The third-person aspect actually works quite well, delivering unprecedented controls and awe-inspiring visuals.



All of the weapons are equipped with primary and secondary functions.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

T  
9.5

### ■ Concept:

Part first-person shooter, part third-person adventure, Jedi Outcast offers intense lightsaber and Force action, plus an incredibly deep online multiplayer experience.

### ■ Graphics:

The texturing and effects are a tad generic, but the animations are superb.

### ■ Sound:

The voice acting is a pleasant surprise.

### ■ Playability:

Stick controls...interesting powers...amazing Force powers.

### ■ Entertainment:

The sing-a-player mode is quite extensive, but the most excitement is garnered online.

### ■ Replay Value:

High.

## SECOND OPINION

Oh dear God, this is a cool game. The amount of time that will be poured into this title by Star Wars freaks will be staggering. The weapons and graphical presentation of the Star Wars universe is second to none. I got shivers running up and down my spine when I saw an ion cannon's fire and recoil mechanism behaving exactly the same as it did in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Then there's the sound...the wonderful, wonderful sound. There's no finer compliment I can give than to say the effects are absolutely on par with anything in any of the movies. When you're in the middle of a blaster fight, you'll hear not only the shots, but the ricochets and clattering of falling bodies as well. On a different note, the puzzle elements can be annoying — but next to the swiftness of gameplay that comes pouring out of every level, I doubt you'll notice it too much.

KRISTIAN — 9.5

■ STYLE 1 TO 32 PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER LUCASARTS ■ DEVELOPER RAVEN SOFTWARE ■ RELEASE MARCH 28





PC

# DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA

BRUCE WILLIS HITS IT BIG TIME!

**"Everything is solid, but there's little that will make you throw your hands up with delight."**

If you really think about it, *Die Hard* is the perfect movie to base a game on. Everything takes place in one building – of course it's over 40 stories tall (not including the sub-basements and sewer). Sure, there are a lot of other films that could be cool to make into a first-person shooter, (*Driving Miss Daisy*) but what else has such memorable lines as "Welcome to the party, pal!" or "Yipee-ki-yay motherf%^%&?" Capitalizing on this obvious advantage, many of these classic quips have been included in the game – with no editing whatsoever. It's not very often that a game will drop the fenheimer (or F-Bomb as Justin likes to call it), but I must applaud those that do. If you're building a game that isn't suitable for underage gamers due to its level of violence, why not go the whole nine yards and cater directly to the audience you're marketing to by putting some stronger language in as well? That's not to say Mr. McClane uses filthy language at every turn in this game, he just lets it fly once in a while, that's all.

Pottery mouth notwithstanding, Piranha has pieced together a hell of a game here. The environments you wander around in are beautifully detailed, and even better, you can destroy most of them. At one point, I found myself squaring off against a number of terrorists who had taken up position in a room lined with books. Each errant shot sent paper flying into the air, resulting in a chaotic and frantic firefight. Other times, I'd pick

up a fire-axe from the wall and start hacking away to my heart's content.

There were some bizarre failings, however. Any terrorist you killed who wasn't a boss would disappear, leaving only a bloodstain on the floor. Why have a game that prides itself on its realism, then not have bodies that stay when you dispatch an enemy? It doesn't make a lot of sense, but nothing seems to make a lot of sense any more since I was recently subjected to my first and only viewing of *Roger and Me*. Frightening.

In terms of weaponry, you're able to find quite an assortment when your enemies give up the ghost. Everything from heavy machine guns to small-caliber pistols will be made available; but as in most FPSs, the sub-machine gun will become your best friend. I seemed to use up a whole lot of ammo trying to bring down people at short range, so either my aim was terrible, or the accuracy of my weapon was less than good. In any event, make sure to get into the habit of reloading after squeezing the trigger at all – chances are you'll only have a few rounds left.

There's no reason not to get this game if you're a *Die Hard* fan, or an FPS freak like me. Everything is solid, but there's little that will make you throw your hands up with delight. Plus, there's no multiplayer. A solid buy, but not a must-have. – KRISTIAN

## THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE  
ESRB

8

### ■ Concept:

Lead John McClane on his quest to rid the world of people named Hans and Fritz

### ■ Graphics:

The LithTech engine gives *Nakatomi* an explosive and highly detailed environment for you to destroy

### ■ Sound:

Piranha has managed to pry Reginald VelJohnson away from his *Family Matters* ruminations long enough to reprise his role as Sgt. Al Powell

### ■ Playability:

The standardization of the FPS control architecture continues to be upheld here (aka straight butta')

### ■ Entertainment:

This is a good way to blow off some steam

### ■ Replay Value:

Low

## SECOND OPINION

This "new" *Die Hard* saga is just a rebash of the first film's plot, although this time John McClane is after his daughter, who has been kidnapped by yet another band of greasy Eurotrash terrorists.

Fittingly, this game takes place inside the claustrophobic confines of the Nakatomi building. Like Bruce Willis, the LithTech engine is beginning to show its age; but, like most of the characters he plays, it's got enough gumption to handle one last mission. There's nothing new here, but all the basics of PC FPS are capably done. The standard-issue controls work well, and the graphical presentation is nearly bug-free. The action unfolds at a hectic pace, and the missions are well thought out, often requiring you to accomplish the task at hand in a limited time. There are better first-person games on the market, but the appeal of the *Die Hard* franchise is strong enough to make this worth your while.

MAIT – 8

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER SIERRA STUDIOS ■ DEVELOPER PIRANHA INTERACTIVE ■ RELEASE APRIL 23



"Outta the car, junior!"



These look like developers to us

"Hello, world!"



Something evil this way went



Taming fires is sometimes just part of the job



PC

# GLOBAL OPERATIONS

GLOBAL APPEAL

One cannot review this game without comparing it to its contemporary cousins. Therefore, I will hereby invoke the name of Counter-Strike, and say this: Kids, this ain't no Counter-Strike. That's not to say that Global Operations is necessarily bad, but it just doesn't finesse the genre like others on the market. In particular, I had a really difficult time adapting to the inconsistent accuracy of the weapons. I chose the Sniper character, saved enough money to buy the best rifle, then was unable to put it to good use, even though most of the time I had squeezed the trigger with my crosshairs centered on some terrorist's forehead.

True, this title does some interesting things with insertion techniques, character selections (be a Sniper, Heavy, Gunner, Recon guy, etc.), and so forth, but who gives a dang? If I can't have accurate weapons, I could care less about how I enter the field after being shot by God-knows-who. Now let's take things down a notch here. This is still a great FPS multiplayer title with A LOT of bells and whistles. The environments are gorgeous and huge, the character models are sweet, and the sounds are excellent. I'm sure there will be patches to fix a lot of these things, but as it stands now, GO is simply treading water. You may want to try this one out for size in a couple of months.

KRISTIAN



## Concept:

Squad-sized combat utilizing realistic weaponry and geography.

## Graphics:

Nearly everything you see in this game has been re-created with painstaking attention to accuracy.

## Sound:

The directional and environmental effects created by nearby firelights are a welcome addition.

## Playability:

There are some funny weapon layouts for weapon switching, and things like that, but you can change things around in your own way.

## Entertainment:

Realist military FPS fans should come on down — this is your kind of game.

## Replay Value:

High.

## SECOND OPINION

So this is what all the hubbub is about. Not being a Counter-Strike expert or anything, perhaps the most revealing thing I can say is that I had a lot of fun with Global Ops. I'm sure there are things to pick apart between the two, but I'm confident that just about anyone will have a helluva time with this title. Deploy!

KATO - 8



PC

# FREEDOM FORCE

A COMICAL VIEW

I have rarely seen the implementation of an idea take on such precise form. I seriously doubt that anyone could spoof a superhero/comic book game any better than this. First of all, the dialogue and cutscenes are sidesplitting. The Minuteman (your first hero) will sometimes yell, "Right makes might!" before slamming his weapon into an enemy's skull. That's just one example; every character — be they good or evil — has their own taglines you'll hear as a battle wears on. The cutscenes have this ridiculous, mid-1960s feel about them that you just can't help but giggle at, and the art looks like it could have been lifted right out of some of those old books.

Gameplay wise, Freedom Force feels like an action/RPG hybrid. Each of the superheroes you recruit has a certain number of powers available for use, and at the end of each successful mission, you're given a certain number of points you can funnel into your heroes. What ultimately happens is you begin to have a vested interest in seeing these warriors of justice come through missions in one piece, so you can continue upgrading their skills and abilities. The sheer number of different powers and options in the single and multiplayer games is terrifying. The best part is — this is a game everyone can enjoy — not just comic book fanatics. — KRISTIAN



The evil frozen super-commie-villain is planning your demise



From left to right: Minuteman, El Diablo, Manbot, Alche-Miss

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T 8.75

## Concept:

Fight the evil frozen communists with the powers of goodness and other stuff

## Graphics:

Great-looking character models, but the camera needs some major work

## Sound:

Tons of campy dialogue and humorous banter will make sure your speakers stay turned up

## Playability:

As something that hasn't really been done before, there's a good bit to learn, but not so much that you'll feel overwhelmed

## Entertainment:

Developing your character is a lot of fun, but getting through the missions can be a pain

## Replay Value:

High

## SECOND OPINION

The Golden Age of comics is vividly expressed within Freedom Force. All the characters are artistically fashioned after the works of the great Jack Kirby, and the dialogue is just as boisterous as the classic Superman radio dramas. Irrational Games did everything in its power to ensure that this game felt like an interactive comic book. The animated storyboards, plot progressions, and secret origins of the characters are absolutely absurd, but you wouldn't want them any other way. As you'll quickly find out, however, the gameplay is deeper than you could ever imagine. You can customize every little detail, recruit new characters, create your own, and destroy everything in the environments — including cars and buildings. The best way I can describe it is a lightweight Dungeons & Dragons with capes. Very cool, yet very bizarre.

REINER - 8.75

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER BARKING DOG STUDIOS ■ RELEASE MARCH 25

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER IRRATIONAL GAMES ■ RELEASE MARCH 25





PC

## DARK PLANET: BATTLE FOR NATROLIS

DOCKING BAY 94

**L**et's all hope that a LucasArts lawyer doesn't play this game – the amount of copywritten material used in Dark Planet is enough to give even a non-Star Wars junkie pause. Case in point: One of the Colonist units is called a Probe Droid. There are so many things wrong with that, I don't even know where to begin. Other than that little tidbit, this is a solid release through-and-through. There's enough replay to keep things interesting for a while, and the story does a good job of wrapping you up.

There are three different races to play, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages. The Sorin are Natrolis' native inhabitants who don't like the Colonists raping their resources, and hate the evil insectoid Drell who the Colonists have awoken. You should pretty much know where the story is going at this point. Each race has its obligatory flying, ranged, and melee units, but the game really does little to push the envelope in terms of gameplay. The camera is nice (being able to get a ground-level view of a battle is cool), the control is pretty accurate, and the researching techniques seem decent. Basically, what you've got is a beer-there-done-that title that does pretty well by itself. This game will definitely fit the bill for any who have a hankering to make a heavy investment into a good-looking RTS experience. – **KRISTIAN**



These colonists are very orderly

"Flame on, you crazy diamond"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** EDGIES ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 5



THE BOTTOM LINE

**T** 7.5

### ■ Concept:

Human colonists try to bleed a planet dry of resources, then fight some stuff

### ■ Graphics:

Sharp-looking cinematics, decent environments and a great camera system

### ■ Sound:

Eagles has shied away from a lot of voice work for the units and such – what a good idea

### ■ Playability:

This is a good game to learn the genre on – not too hard to begin with, but there's a lot of detail when you want it

### ■ Entertainment:

It starts off a little slow, but things pick up before too long

### ■ Replay Value:

High

## SECOND OPINION

You'd think that by giving you three different races to play, *Dark Planet* maybe, just maybe, would be three times the fun. I don't really think so, but I do applaud the game for the cool design of its three species, even though they don't play too differently from each other. Although I'm not an RTS guru, I was disappointed by a few of the title's nuts and bolts aspects. The mouse camera was cool, but inconsistent – not good when you're trying to whip around and face a sneak attack. Speaking of which, enemy units had a tendency to disappear. Either that, or they'd go unnoticed by my soldiers, only to pop up behind my lines and deep in my territory. On the other hand, even when I told my guys to stand their ground, they'd sometimes go on wild goose chases when I was trying to amass them for bigger, more important battles. All told, *Dark Planet* is only slightly less than the sum of its races, and isn't a bad time.

KATO – 7



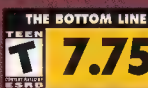
PC

## WARLORDS: BATTLECRY II

THE ONYX METHOD

**A**s far as real-time strategy titles go, *Warlords: Battlecry II* is quite the interesting specimen. There are a lot of things I like about how this game works. For one, the persistent heroes and units are awesome, awesome features. If you're able to keep a few of your soldiers from getting killed during the course of a level, they will have picked up experience from the units they defeated, and will then be made available to you for your next mission as an elite unit. Additionally, various other elite units will be offered, and will accrue experience for victorious encounters as well. What this means is, if you play your cards right, you can start each mission with a stable of powerful allies who can help you turn the tide of any battle. Tell me that isn't sweet?

Conversely, there are a couple of things that just didn't sit right with me while I was playing. The first is the bizarre resource gathering. There seemed to be too many different types, which in turn made collecting all of them kind of worthless on some levels. Another sticking point was the annoying unit AI. True, you can tweak attitude settings for your comrades, but that doesn't end up being a very good substitute for common sense. The last was the presentation – or lack thereof. I didn't feel very invested in this game, or its story, but I sat there pouting in the hours just the same. Will you? That's difficult to say, but if you're too hard-up for an RTS to wait for *WarCraft III*, you might get a kick out of this one. – **KRISTIAN**



**T** 7.75

### ■ Concept:

In RTS with persistent heroes and bizarre resource gathering

### ■ Graphics:

It would have been nice to see more interesting environments, but the units look good.

### ■ Sound:

The music isn't half bad, but the activation and confirmation audios for your people are as annoying as they are canned.

### ■ Playability:

Some may encounter a few gameplay hiccups in terms of how to build and manage units.

### ■ Entertainment:

You'll either find yourself glued to your seat, or getting up to see what's on television.

### ■ Replay Value:

Moderately high

## SECOND OPINION

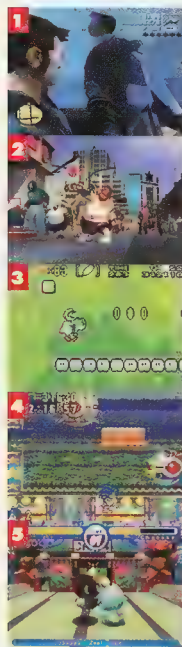
Forget about a story, *Battlecry II* cuts right to the chase. That's good, because it instead draws you in by letting you build up your hero and units from battle to battle. I also like the Campaign mode, where you must not only take over a certain number of territories, but also manage to hold onto them. Pretty solid.

KATO – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SSG ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 13

# CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



## NPD TOP 20

Rankings Based Upon NPD Data For February 2002.  
Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	1	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2	9.5	Oct-01	\$50
No matter what new titles are released, nothing beats the rush felt from hazardous driving and malicious gunplay in Rockstar's epic felonious masterpiece. Throw your guns in the air, and wave 'em like you just don't care! Can anything turn back GTA III's selling power?						
2	N/A	State of Emergency	PS2	8	Feb-02	\$50
Rockstar's one-two punch is not to be denied. While more one-dimensional than GTA III, State of Emergency still scores mad points for the mindless head-bashing tactics. People have been screaming "Damn the machine" for decades now; this title lets you take an active role in said damnation.						
3	N/A	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA	9.5	Feb-02	\$27
It's Mario mania all over again! The title that brought the SNES into prominence is now the top-selling Game Boy Advance game, turning back all other handheld efforts. We're just glad to see nary a Pokémon game in sight. Yoshi would kick Pikachu's furry yellow butt any day.						
4	N/A	Sonic Advance	GBA	8.5	Feb-02	\$36
The classic rivalry continues. Who would've thought a game with Sega's blue hedgehog would be on a Nintendo handheld? With throwback 16-bit gameplay and all-new levels, the speedy Sonic just might have the gusto to flip-flop spots with Mario next month.						
5	N/A	Sonic Adventure 2 Battle	GC	7.5	Feb-02	\$50
This GameCube title edged out some stiff Xbox competition to make it into the Top 5 for two reasons. One is the adorable Chao that you lovingly raise, race, and fight with. The second are the brilliant commercials. Who doesn't love cute, live-action hedgehogs? Who, we ask?						

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	N/A	WWF Raw	Xbox	6.5	Feb-02	\$50
7	N/A	Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Xbox	7	Feb-02	\$50
8	2	Final Fantasy X	PS2	9.75	Dec-01	\$51
9	5	Max Payne	PS2	7.75	Dec-01	\$51
10	3	NBA 2K2	PS2	8.75	Jan-02	\$51
11	4	Madden NFL 2002	PS2	9.75	Aug-01	\$48
12	6	Halo	Xbox	9.5	Nov-01	\$50
13	N/A	Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	PS2	9	Feb-02	\$50
14	N/A	Grand Theft Auto 2	PS-X	7.75	Oct-99	\$11
15	11	Driver 2	PS-X	8.75	Nov-00	\$20
16	13	Super Smash Bros. Melee	GC	9.25	Dec-01	\$50
17	8	Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	PS2	10	Nov-01	\$50
18	10	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$49
19	N/A	Motocross Mania	PS-X	5	Jul-01	\$10
20	17	Gran Turismo 2	PS-X	9.5	Dec-99	\$20

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Krista Barnett-VonNorff, 850/625-2481

## JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Master  
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Onimusha 2	PS2
2	N/A	Let's Organize a J-League Pro Soccer Team	PS2
3	N/A	Xenosaga: Episode I	PS2
4	N/A	Pale Blue	DC
5	N/A	Itadaki Street 3	PS2
6	N/A	Tennis Princess	PS-X
7	N/A	Animal Leader	GC
8	N/A	Samurai	PS2
9	N/A	Ex-Life Game	PS2
10	6	Animal Forest +	GC



## GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Virtua Fighter 4	PS2
2	1	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA
3	N/A	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	PC
4	4	All-Star Baseball 2003	Xbox
5	6	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	PC
6	N/A	Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	PS2
7	2	Final Fantasy X	PS2
8	9	Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	PS2
9	5	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2
10	7	Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	PS2



## PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment  
Source: Krista Barnett-VonNorff, 850/625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	1	Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault	Jan-02	\$27
2	5	Harry Potter & The Sorcerer's Stone	Nov-01	\$28
3	2	The Sims: Hot Date	Nov-01	\$40
4	4	The Sims	Feb-00	\$18
5	7	Roller Coaster Tycoon	May-99	\$19
6	8	Zoo Tycoon	Oct-01	\$45
7	N/A	The Sims: Livin' Large	Sep-00	\$28
8	3	Serious Sam: Second Encounter	Feb-02	\$18
9	N/A	Civilization III	Oct-02	\$16
10	6	NASCAR Racing 2002	Feb-02	\$18





HOT-HEADED. COLD BLOODED.

Ultra bad bounty hunting action.

Third and first person shooter gameplay.

Extreme edge steering action.

# HEADHUNTER

Meet Jack Wade. He's just woken up from a coma to discover he's missing most of his life, his memories, identity, even his mind.

Now he must embark on a quest filled with mystery, murder and carnage in search of himself.

Along the way he will confront ruthless killers, serpentine plots and his own enigmatic past.

HEADHUNTER.

"Headhunter is already looking like it has what it takes to stand in the same place as Syphon Filter or Metal Gear Solid." - OPM, January 2002



Blood  
Violence



PlayStation 2

**Acclaim**  
www.acclaim.com

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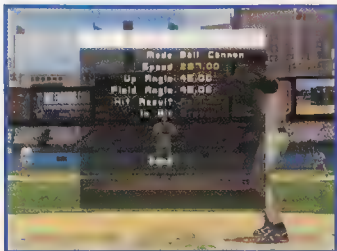






# SECRET ACCESS

## PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



### HIGH HEAT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2003

**Programmer Cheat** – Begin a game, and access the in-game pause menu. From here, press ☐ (x2), ☐ (x2), L1, R1. If you enter this sequence correctly, you'll hear the announcer chuckle. Now, simultaneously press L1, L2, R1, and R2 to bring up a menu that will allow you to tweak every aspect of the game.

Jason Armstrong  
Oslo Park, NC

### MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: ZEONIC FRONT

Unlocking the secret characters in this game is fairly difficult, but as we've found, well worth the effort. Here's what you'll be required to do.

**Char Aznable** – Within Simulation Program 1, perform admirably to secure an S Ranking.

**Garma Zabi** – Within Simulation Program 2, repeat the strategies you used in the first Simulation to secure another S ranking and Garma Zabi.

**Sayla** – Within the Federation Missions, achieve three C Rankings. This one is easy!

Jose Carlio  
Brooklyn, NY

### ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002

**Cheat For Card Points** – This trick is incredibly easy. Begin a new game against the computer. Whenever the CPU is at bat, switch the controller setting so that you have control of the computer team. Don't swing, just strike out every time. By the end of the game, you'll have thrown 27 strikeouts which equates into a perfect game. This feat will be rewarded with 100 Card Points!

**Recover Pitcher Fatigue** – If you want one of your starting pitchers to throw all 162 games, place him on the 15 day disabled list after his last outing. Quickly place him back on your roster and he will regain all of his stamina.

**Thom Brennaman's Expressions** – If you leave a controller idle during a game, a cinematic sequence will begin. At this point, Thom Brennaman will begin talking about random events and stories related to baseball. It's quite amusing.

"The Rhino"  
Toledo, OH



### MISTER MOSQUITO

**Cycle Minigame** – At the Main Menu, hold L2, then rotate the right analog stick 30 times in a clockwise direction.

"Joystick Juggalo"  
Detroit, MI

### GRAND THEFT AUTO III

We received thousands of emails from readers asking us why we never printed any codes for Grand Theft Auto III. These people are obviously blind. We printed an entire page of cheats in the January issue. We've decided to rerun a portion of them this month, but this is the last time. If we hear any more whining, we'll sic Justin on you!

Enter any of these codes during gameplay. You don't need to pause or hold anything down, just tap the button sequence.

**All Weapons** – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

**Crazed Pedestrians** – R2, R1, ☐ (x2), L1, Up, Down, Disguises – Right, Down, Left, Up, L1, L2, Up, Left, Down, Right

**Dodo Car** – Right, R2, ☐ (x2), R1, L2, Down, L1, R1

**Enraged Pedestrians** – Down, Up, Left, Up, ☐ (x2), R1, R2, L1, L2

**Full Armor** – R2 (x2), L1, L2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

**Full Health** – R2 (x2), L1, R1, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

**Increase Car Handling** – R1, L1, R2, L1, Left, R1 (x2), ☐ (x2), L1 (x2), Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

**Lower Wanted Level** – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down

**No Weather** – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, ☐ (x2), L1

**Nuclear Blast** – L2, R2, L1, R1, L2, R2, ☐ (x2), L1, L2, L1

**Overcast Weather** – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, ☐ (x2), L1

**Pedestrians War** – Down, Up, Left, Up, ☐ (x2), R1, R2, L1, L2

**Rainy Weather** – L1, L2, R1, R2 (x2), R1, L2, ☐ (x2), L1

**Raise Wanted Level** – R2 (x2), L1, R2, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right

**Speed Up Time** – ☐ (x3), ☐ (x5), L1, ☐ (x2), ☐ (x2), L1

**Superman** – Right, R2, ☐ (x2), L1, L2, Down, L1, R1

**Tank** – ☐ (x6), R1, L2, L1, ☐ (x2), ☐ (x2), L1

"The GI Staff"  
Minneapolis, MN

## CODE OF THE MONTH



### STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER

Enter all of these cheats at the Codes screen.

**Director Mode** – DIRECTOR

**Disable HUD** – NOHUD

**Invincibility** – QUENTIN

**Unlock Everything** – PNYRCADE

**Wacky Controls** – JARJAR

Nathan McDaniel  
Brisbane, CA

### SPY HUNTER

To get these hidden visual goodies, select a new game file, then enter the code as your name and hit Done. It will disappear. Now enter whatever name you'd like, and find them in the System Options' Movie Player.

**Concept Art** – SCW823

**Making of FMV** – MAKING

**Saliva Spy Hunter Theme FMV** – GUNN

**Saliva "Your Disease" FMV** – SALIVA

**Test Animatic FMV** – WWS413

Cab Calloway  
Calumet City, IL

### STAR WARS: RACER REVENGE

Here's a detailed listing of the techniques needed to unlock the bonus racers.

**Darth Maul** – Place the top Knock Out rating for every track.

**Darth Vader** – First, unlock the Episode I Anakin, Watto, and Darth Maul, then complete Tournament mode as one of these new podracers.

**Episode I Anakin** – Place the fastest time for every track.

**Episode I Sebulba** – Place in first place for all three tournaments as Sebulba.

**Watto** – Place the fastest three lap times for every track.

Jenny Jones  
Miami, FL



**DRIVEN**

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu.

**All Cars** – Up, Down, Right (x2), Left, Up (x2), Down  
**All Tracks** – Up (x2), Left, Down, Right (x2), Up  
**Arcade Championships** – Right, Left, Up, Right, Down (x2), Left (x2)  
**Completed Story Mode** – Down, Left, Up, Right (x2), Up, Down, Left  
**Multiplayer Championships** – Left, Down, Left, Up, Right, Left, Down, Right

"The Vidman"  
 Uptown, MN

**VIRTUA FIGHTER 4**

**Alter Main Menu Background** – Enter the Options menu, then head into the Settings folder. Access Game, then press L1 or R1 to change the background colors.

**Dural** – In Kumite mode, defeat Dural.

**Dural's Hangar (Versus Mode)** – Create a character and reach the highest ranking.

**VF1 Character Models** – Load a created character (who must be at least 1st Dan rank), then simultaneously press the Punch and Kick buttons while still at the Character Selection screen. Hold this combo until the match begins.

Mason Douglas  
 Lake Bluff, IL

**FATAL FRAME**

**Full Ending** – To see the story in its entirety, you'll need to accomplish a number of tasks. First, beat the game on the Normal difficulty level. Doing this will unlock the Nightmare difficulty setting. Play through this mode without selecting individual chapters. If you accomplish this feat, you'll be treated to an alternate ending sequence.

Jared Fritz  
 Los Angeles, CA

**JEREMY McGRATH'S  
SUPERCROSS WORLD**

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu.

**Infinite Turbo** – Down (x3), L Button, R Button, Z  
**Moon Gravity** – Left, Right, Up, Down, B (x3)

Michael Douglas  
 New York, NY

**SOCCER SLAM**

Enter all of these cheats at the Title Screen. You'll need to enter these codes very carefully, yet also as rapidly as you can. When entered correctly, a faint message will appear on screen for a brief second. Again, these cheats are extremely touchy, and require perfect inputs without pausing.

**Beach Ball** – R Button, Right (x2), Down, Y, X  
**Big Heads** – R Button, L Button, Up (x2), Y (x2)  
**Big Hits** – L Button, R Button, Up (x2), X, Y  
**Classic Ball** – R Button, Right, Left (x2), Y, X  
**Eye Ball** – R Button, Right, Down, Up, X (x2)  
**Globe Ball** – R Button, Right (x2), Left, X (x2)  
**Infinite Turbo** – L Button, R Button, Right, Up, X (x2)  
**Modern Film** – Y, X, Y, X, Y, X, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left  
**Rusty Ball** – R Button, Left, Up (x2), Y (x2)

Irene Sells  
 Deforest, NJ

**NFL Blitz 2002**

Input the following Player ID/PINs to unlock several of the hidden player models in the game. Also, for a list of Programmer cheats, be sure to snag a copy of the incredibly hot April issue of Game Informer!!!

Team	Player ID	PIN
Bear	BEAR	1985
Clown	CLOWN	1974
Cowboy	COWBOY	1996
Deer Hunter	DEER	1997
Dolphin	DOLPHIN	1972
Eagles	EAGLE	1981
Horse	HORSE	1999
Lion	LION	1963
Rams	RAM	2000
Pinto	PINTO	1986
Pirate	PIRATE	2001
Tiger	TIGER	1977
Viking	VIKING	1977

"Daddy Fat Sacks"  
 Memphis, TN

**GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY**

Enter all of these codes as Player Names.

**10,000 Gold** – 10000K  
**Alien (Wizard)** – SKY100  
**Anti-Death** – 1ANGEL  
**Baseball Player (Knight)** – DIB626  
**Bondage (Dwarf)** – NUD069  
**Cheerleader (Valkyrie)** – CEL721  
**Crossbow Super Shot** – SSHOTS  
**Evil Shaman (Wizard)** – GARM99  
**Football Player (Knight)** – RIZ721  
**Full Turbo** – PURPLE  
**Grim Reaper (Valkyrie)** – TWN300  
**Invincibility** – INVULN  
**Invisibility** – 000000  
**Jedi (Knight)** – DARTHCH  
**Jester (Dwarf)** – ICE600  
**Jester Stick Figure (Dwarf)** – STX222  
**Jester Stick Figure 2 (Dwarf)** – KJH105  
**Jester Stick Figure 3 (Dwarf)** – PNK666  
**Kung-Fu (Knight)** – SJB964  
**Modern Warrior (Knight)** – STG333  
**Modern Warrior 2 (Knight)** – CSS222  
**Modern Warrior 3 (Knight)** – ARV984  
**Nine Potions & Keys** – ALLFU  
**Ninja (Knight)** – TAK118  
**Ogre (Warrior)** – CAS400  
**Orc Boss (Warrior)** – MTN200  
**Pharaoh (Wizard)** – DES700  
**Quick Toss** – QCKSHOT  
**Rat (Warrior)** – RAT333  
**Reflect Shot** – REFLEX  
**Roman Centurion (Knight)** – BAT900  
**School Girl (Valkyrie)** – AYAS55  
**Shrunken Enemies** – DELTA1  
**Speed Burst** – XSPED  
**Summoner (Wizard)** – SUM224  
**Triple Shot** – MENAGE  
**Waitress (Knight)** – KAO292  
**X-Ray Vision** – PEEKIN  
**Zombie (Wizard)** – GARM00

"GI Droid"  
 (location unknown – last seen giving  
 Samuel L. Jackson a foot massage)

**SPY HUNTER**

**Saliva "Spy Hunter Theme" FMV** – While this game's disc holds much less than a DVD, Midway still saw fit to include the Saliva music video for the classic "Peter Gunn Theme". Just go to a new file, input "GUNN", then put whatever name you'd like. The video is in the System Options' Movie Viewer.

Butterfly Princess Julie  
 Macon, GA



## NBA STREET

Enter all of these cheats at the Versus screen, using the A, B, Y, X buttons to change the icons. The numbers listed in the codes signify the number of times each button must be pressed. Once the button sequence is entered, press any directional button to activate the cheat.

**ABA Ball** – 0, 0, 1, 2  
**ABA Socks** – 2, 2, 2, 2  
**Athletic Joe "The Show"** – 1, 1, 1, 2  
**Authentic Uniforms** – 0, 2, 1, 1  
**Beach Ball** – 0, 0, 1, 1  
**Big Heads** – 2, 2, 2, 3  
**Captain Quicks** – 2, 1, 3, 0  
**Casual Uniforms** – 0, 2, 4, 4  
**Disable Alley-Oops** – 0, 3, 1, 0  
**Disable Auto Replays** – 1, 1, 1, 1  
**Disable HUD** – 1, 1, 2, 1  
**Disable Player Indicators** – 1, 1, 3, 1  
**Disable Shot Clock** – 2, 2, 2, 0  
**Disable Shot Indicator** – 1, 1, 1, 3  
**Disable Two Pointers** – 0, 1, 3, 0  
**EA BIG Ball** – 0, 0, 4, 1  
**Easy Distance Shots** – 0, 3, 3, 0  
**Explosive Rims** – 1, 1, 1, 4  
**Harder Distance Shots** – 0, 1, 1, 0  
**Less Blocks** – 0, 1, 2, 0  
**Less GameBreakers** – 2, 1, 1, 0  
**Less Steals** – 0, 2, 3, 0  
**Mad Hands** – 2, 3, 1, 0  
**Medicine Ball** – 0, 0, 2, 2  
**Mega Dunking** – 0, 4, 4, 0  
**More GameBreakers** – 2, 3, 3, 0  
**No Cheats** – 0, 2, 0, 2  
**No Dunks** – 1, 3, 2, 0  
**No GameBreakers** – 2, 4, 4, 0  
**No Turbo** – 1, 3, 3, 0  
**NuFX Ball** – 0, 0, 3, 4  
**Player Names** – 1, 1, 0, 1  
**Soccer Ball** – 0, 0, 4, 4  
**Springtime Joe "The Show"** – 1, 1, 1, 0  
**Sticky Fingers** – 3, 2, 1, 0  
**Summertime Joe "The Show"** – 1, 1, 4, 1  
**Super Swats** – 3, 1, 2, 0  
**Tiny Heads** – 2, 2, 2, 4  
**Tiny Players** – 2, 2, 2, 1  
**Ultimate Power** – 1, 2, 3, 0  
**Unlimited Turbo** – 1, 2, 2, 0  
**Volleyball** – 0, 0, 3, 3  
**WNBA Ball** – 0, 0, 2, 3

Nigel Harrington  
Dallas, TX



## UFC TAPOUT

**The Cat** – To unlock this saucy lass, win four matches in a row in Arcade mode.

**Femme Fatale** – The other hot mama can be unlocked by winning eight consecutive matches in Arcade mode.

**Ice-T** – To unlock this legendary rapper (turned movie star), win 16 consecutive matches in Arcade mode.

**The Mask** – Unlocking this mysterious grappler requires you to win 27 consecutive matches in Arcade mode.

Thomas Valentine  
Hillshire, WA



## SPY HUNTER

To enter these Easter egg cheats, you'll need to select a new game file, then enter the code as your name. Once entered, input any name you want, then enter the System Options to find the goodies.

**Classic Spy Hunter Game** – OGSFY  
**Making of FMV** – MAKING  
**Saliva Spy Hunter Theme FMV** – GUNN  
**Saliva "Your Disease" FMV** – SALIVA

Bruce Willis  
Balding Acres, KY

## TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

Enter all of these codes from the in-game pause menu.

**No Blood** – Hold the L Button, and press Start, Black, A, B, Start.

**Treyarch Decks** – hold the L Button, and press White, B, Up, A, Right, Down, Start.

Louise Hampton  
Deer Wood, WV



## RALLYSPORT CHALLENGE

**Bonus Cars** – Five high-powered vehicles are hidden within RallySport Challenge, and no, you can't view them on the Car Selection screen. Here's the means of unlocking them.

**Citroen Xsara Kit** – Place in first on Mediterranean Rally.

**Nissan Micra** – Place in first on Pro Rally Cup.

**Ford R2 200** – Place in first on all of the Rallicross International races.

**Renault 5 Turbo** – Place in first on all of the Ice Racing International Circuit races.

**Saab 9-3 Viggen** – Place in first on all of the Koenig Unlimited races.

Vinny Gabbot  
Milpitas, CA

## ESPN NFL PRIMETIME 2002

Enter all of these cheats at the Code screen.

**Aloha Stadium** – ALOHA  
**Controller Scoring** – SCOREBOX  
**Dome Weather** – SHAKE IT UP  
**Lively Crowd** – HOWDY  
**Show Everyone** – SHOW EVERYONE  
**Slippery Hands** – READY TO FUMBLE  
**Super Jumps** – SUPERMAN  
**Unstoppable Ball Carrier** – CAN'T TOUCH THIS

Theodore Smidley  
Chicago, IL



## TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

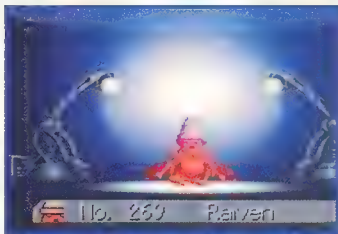
Enter both of these case-sensitive codes at the Cheats menu.

**All Created Skaters** – WeEatDirt  
**All FMV Sequences** – ROLLIT

Brett Favre  
Green Bay, WI



## GAME BOY ADVANCE



### MONSTER RANCHER ADVANCE

The listing below shows the names that will unlock the different monster types in this amazing game. You won't be able to enter any names over four characters until later in the game. Also, these names are case sensitive.

Monster	Name
Ace	Rika
Clocker	zompe
Crab Zuum	TK
Crono	Keepsly
Crystalla	Crystal
Diablos	Word
Diva	Infinite
DJ Mogi	Willi
Dogmar	Killer
Dragon	pal
Durahan	99%POW
Fankung	Football
Flighty	Flighty
Gespent	Angel
Golem	PAI
Holy Knight	Paladin
Joker	MAE
Loud Joker	Project0
Magmaheart	Kawrea
Moon Light	Justice
Naskar	Luminous
Ninja	Ninja
Piyokkung	Strange
Seiven	Avenger
Silverface	Torble
Skull Gold	MEGADETH
Stalgunner	Cyber

Jonathan Hales  
Golden Ridge, ID

### GOLDEN SUN

**Rename Characters** – When the time comes where you have the option to give Isaac a new name, tap Select three times. A bell will ring out, signaling that the cheat is in effect. You will now have the opportunity to give new names to Gerald, Ivan, and Mia. Before entering Mia's new name, press Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Select. This sequence will allow you to edit the names of Felix, Jenna, and Sheba.

Gavin Rose  
Honolulu, HI

### PETER PAN: RETURN TO NEVER LAND

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

**Jungle** – RGCKYD  
**Beach** – PGCMMD  
**Forest** – CNCCKG

Randy Coston  
Pixyland.com/peterpan

## PC PERSONAL COMPUTER



### SID MEIER'S SIMGOLF

**Cheat Mode** – During gameplay simultaneously press [Control] and S. Release the keys then type in bomb-sheep.

**Extra Cash** – At any point during gameplay, simultaneously press [Shift] + [Equals] to fatten your wallet.

Yirsmiv Otto  
Alpena, MI

### COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

**Infinite Skirmish Time** – To enable this code, you'll be required to edit a game file, so create backup copies before hacking your game to bits. Using a text editor, enter the westwood/renege/data directory and edit the "svrcfg\_skirmish.ini" file. Simply change the "game-time" value to zero.

Jason Hughes  
Indianapolis, IN

### STRONGHOLD

To enter these cheats, head to the Main Menu and simultaneously press [Shift], [Alt], and A. From here, input any of the codes listed below.

**100 Popularity/1,000 Gold** – [Alt] + X

**All Missions** – [Alt] + C

**Free Building** – [Alt] + K

Kenneth Brown  
Atlanta, GA

### DISCIPLES II: DARK PROPHECY

To input these cheats, begin a game, then tap [Enter]. At this point, type in the sequence to activate the codes.

**9,999 Gold** – moneyfornothing

**All Allies** – cometogether

**Build More Structures** – anotherbrickinthewall

**Complete Mission** – wearethechampions

**Full Health** – help!

**Reveal Map** – herecomesthesun

Greg Blaas  
Greenwood City, NH

## GAME SHARK

### PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

#### HERDY GURDY

Master Code (Must Be On) –  
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E  
EEAC586 BCD867F2

100 Bells –  
FEA9EB9E BCA99BE7

200 Doops Herded –  
FEA9F5FE BCA99B4B

200 Gromps Herded –  
FEA9F582 BCA99B4B

200 Bleeps Herded –  
FEA9F596 BCA99B4B

Climbing Feather –  
FEA9DC02 BCA99B84

Boots –  
FEA9DC06 BCA99B84

Swimming Costume –  
FEA9DC0E BCA99B84

Power Gloves –  
FEA9DC0A BCA99B84

All Herder Items –  
FEA9DC73 BCA99B88  
DEA9DC72 DBA89E87  
FEA9DC7A BCA99B88

#### KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002

Master Code (Must Be On) –  
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E  
EE8B7E3A BCCA4112

Infinite Creation Points –  
FEBE644E BCA99B4B  
FEABA39A BCA99B4B

#### ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

Master Code (Must Be On) –  
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E  
EE8ED896 BCE19552

All Levels –  
DEB6604E BBA89A82  
DEB6604A BCA99B92

#### FATAL FRAME

Master Code (Must Be On) –  
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E  
EE8E43FE BCCB77E2  
Infinite Health –  
CE99D41A BCA99C77

## ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these highlighted pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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# CLASSIC GI

## TRON: THE BIRTH OF THE FUTURE

**T**wenty years after its release, *Tron* stands as a stunningly prescient piece of filmmaking, one that still resonates strongly within the video game community. Although the games based on the movie weren't released until after it hit theatres, *Tron* is the first video game movie, and was the first time computer gaming really infiltrated popular culture. For that reason, the film is still well-loved by gamers who can remember the hazy days of the early '80s, many of whom rejoiced when the recently released *Tron 20th Anniversary Collector's Edition DVD* (which features a lengthy second disc of extras and a "Making Of" documentary) was announced.

This cult following is well justified, for a number of reasons. The brainchild of Steven Lisberger, a Hollywood animator and computer game enthusiast, *Tron* explores heady conceptual territory, addressing ideas about cyberspace and the Internet that wouldn't become everyday realities until nearly a decade after its 1982 release. Created using a combination of live actors, computer-rendered 3D models, and painstakingly handlit matte backdrops, *Tron* is also the first movie to rely on computers for its special effects wizardry, a practice that has become ubiquitous in the following years.

Lisberger, who had been creating computer graphics for television commercials, was adamant in his belief that com-

puters would change the way films were made. *Tron* was to be his grand venture into uncharted waters, and he began pitching his script to various Hollywood film houses. Eventually, *Tron* found a home at Disney, a company that was desperately searching for a new direction after years of churning out stale retreads of aging franchises like *Herbie the Love Bug*. Disney executives approved the project based on black-and-white, airbrushed storyboards Lisberger had created himself.

Once the project was underway, Lisberger assembled a team to create his unique vision, relying primarily on two production houses that had helped to pioneer the use of computer imaging: Information International Inc. (Triple-I) and Mathematic Applications Group Inc. (MAGI). Richard Taylor, the special effects lead on *Tron*, describes the technological hurdles the team had to overcome.

"[Triple I] was one of the first companies to do what's called raster graphic or CGI. That's where the computer is imitating the effect of light hitting an object, and bouncing it to a theoretical camera, creating a three-dimensional

**A *Tron* video game based on the film was released to arcades shortly after the movie hit theaters**



***Tron*'s eerie blue effects were done with a painstaking backlighting technique**

working in front of black screens had to be painstakingly lit by artists who worked on huge blow-ups of 65mm film cells. Most of the action sequences in the film were completely computer-generated, including the now-famous lightcycle racing scenes. Compared to the games of its day, *Tron*'s visuals were quite simply mind-blowing, and showed off fully polygonal environments that wouldn't become commonplace in computer games for many years. "In one of the opening scenes, in Flynn's arcade, Jeff Bridges is playing the game *Space Paranoids*," comments Taylor. "[That] was a complete raster graphics game. At the time the movie was coming out there were Pong and Pac-Man and Asteroids – that was the state-of-the-art. Atari was pushing hard to get to raster graphic gaming. *Tron* previewed the games of today – totally interactive, shaded, real-time computer games."

Though it could be argued that *Tron* effectively charted the course for the next two decades of special effects, the film was inexplicably snubbed by Oscar voters, and received not one technical award from the Academy. Apparently, many felt the use of computers to produce effects amounted to little more than "cheating." Taylor ascribes this oversight to a mixture of ignorance and fear.

"Basically, what the assumption was – literally, this is what people thought – that we sat down at a computer somehow and kind of typed out what we wanted the movie to be or look like, and the computer did it. [Laughs] That's exactly what they thought. They also thought, 'Here's the future; there goes my job. The next thing you know they're going to be re-creating John Wayne.' They were intimidated by that."

Looking back 20 years later, it becomes obvious that, for

**The *Tron* 20th Anniversary DVD includes interviews with Special Effects lead Richard Taylor, original concept art by Moebius, and a handful of deleted scenes**



object. In the time we made *Tron* there were no PCs, there was no in-home computing or anything like that at all. Everyone had their own unique computers. The one at Triple I was called the Foonly, it was a one-of-a-kind, handmade, hard-wired computer. It was roughly the size of four refrigerators put together. Today, with the power of my G4, I could blow away what we did on *Tron* with what I have on a desktop now."

The work was slow, as live actors



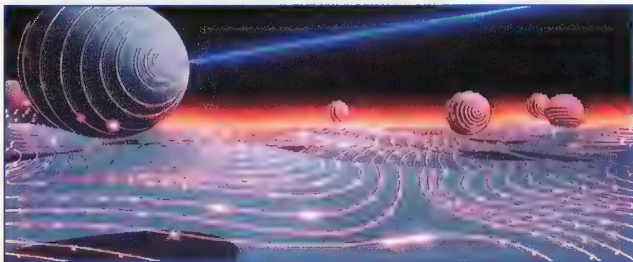
all its innovation and forward-thinking ideas – *Tron* isn't a very good film. The plot is predictable and clunky, and the (mostly) B-list cast doesn't do much to save the wooden dialogue. Jeff Bridges, starring as Flynn, a renegade computer programmer who is mistakenly downloaded into a mainframe network and must battle the HAL-like Master Control Program and its minions in a highly-stylized cyberspace environment, manages to coast by on his natural charisma, which isn't nearly enough to save the severely flawed affair. Still, the film's art direction remains timeless, bathing the stark, minimal sets in an eerie blue glow. Even the sequences that are there for no other purpose than to

rushed to print, without sufficient time for test screenings and corrective editing. "We could have put the lines in there differently, we could have cut the movie down. I think the first reel is confusing to the audience. Dramatically, I think the film didn't reach the level that it could have, and that was because of having to rush it to get it into the theaters. Almost every movie is screened before a test audience, then you get feedback of whether or not people are getting it, or what they don't like, and you can [make changes]."

Despite his reservations, Taylor remains proud of the work that he did on the film. "Aesthetically, it holds up. It has a unique look that will never be recaptured because of



*Tron's* CG artists achieved a graphical quality that video games wouldn't equal for many years



show off the special effects team's new arsenal of high-tech toys, like the tank battles or the lightcycle races, have proven surprisingly enduring. In its best moments, *Tron* perfects a moody futurism that captures the lonely spirit of cyberspace better than any of the films (*The Matrix*, *The Lawnmower Man*) it helped inspire.

In hindsight, Richard Taylor blames many of the film's faults, and its eventual box office failure, on Disney's poor marketing and shortsighted decision making. *Tron*, originally scheduled for a Christmas, 1982 release, was pushed forward to late-summer, due to Disney's executive desire to sabotage Don Bluth's (who had recently defected from the company) *The Secret of NIMH*, by putting it head-to-head with their would-be blockbuster. This meant *Tron* had to be

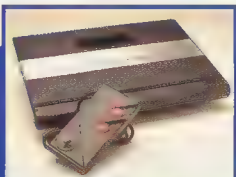
the fact that all of those characters were done by using real light and multiple exposures. It's fabulous because it's a whole other look, and it needed that," he recalls.

Watching the film again, after all these years, one can't help but agree. *Tron* is not a great movie, but it is most certainly an important one. Without Lisberger, Taylor, and all the other pioneers who worked on this groundbreaking feature, the computer generated spectacles that we all take for granted in films like *Jurassic Park*, or games like *Final Fantasy X*, might still exist only in the imaginations of their creators. For that, both the video game and film industries owe the makers of *Tron* an eternal debt.

## THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

In May of 1984, Atari announced plans for a new home console, the 7800. The 7800 ran on a 4K chipset named the Maria, which could move over 100 objects onscreen at once, and display 256 colors, an impressive mark for its day. The 7800 would also be compatible with Atari's extensive library of 2600 cartridges.

Shortly following this announcement, Atari was sold to ex-Commodore head Jack Tramiel. This change of ownership, coupled with the complete implosion of the US video game market in late 1984, meant that the 7800 wouldn't be released until June of 1985. By that time, the Nintendo Entertainment System was already gathering steam, and the 7800 was doomed to be another in a long line of Atari failures.



CLASSIC GI

# GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Joe Ferrone

Every month one of *Game Informer's* readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



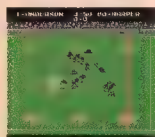
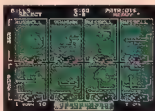
## TECMO SUPER BOWL

■ FORMAT GENESIS  
■ PUBLISHER TECMO

Tecmo takes home the trophy! My favorite classic game would have to be Tecmo Super Bowl for the Sega Genesis. Compared to today's football games, it lacked a lot. For one thing, it didn't even include all the NFL teams. If memory serves me correctly, it only featured eight or so teams. It also lacked most of the features found in later football games, such as trades or a Season mode.

However, the fun in this game was playing against friends. Even today, I can't think of a football game that is more fun to play in multiplayer mode. I can remember sitting around with my friends, having little tournaments which I would usually win. We would play for hours trying to prove who was truly the best.

Though primitive now, the gameplay in this game was amazing for its time. The offensive and defensive controls were easy to learn and remember. Unlike some other football games, neither the offense or defense had an advantage – both were determined by the skill of the players involved. Tecmo Super Bowl is probably not one people remember, but for its time it was a really good game. What made this game great was its pure "smash mouth" football. Like many other good classic games, its fun was not matched in the sequel, Tecmo Super Bowl II: Special Edition. Though this game added a lot to the series, it seemed to lack the fun of the original. As the series progressed onto modern day systems, it simply got worse. Eventually the series just died off, but not before putting forth one truly memorable game.



GENESIS

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



RETRO  
RATING  
**9.5**



**S**onic or Mario? The question sparked more debate than "Coke or Pepsi" and "Tastes Great, Less Filling" combined. Sonic the Hedgehog was a breakthrough title on the Genesis, while Super Mario World made the launch of Super Nintendo a success. One year later, Sega kept the assault going with this power-packed second effort, while Nintendo countered with nothing. This sequel brought a new sidekick, the two-tailed fox Miles "Tails" Prower, and a revolutionary (although slowdown-prone) two-player, split-screen mode. Sonic's new moves included a charge-up speedburst that meant you didn't need a running start for speed. The game's level design was near flawless, with countless hidden areas and rings. You could blow through them in under a minute, or take five times that exploring. Stages included a jungle, a pinball casino, and a futuristic, watery level. Gameplay was sublime, though Sonic's jumping could be messed up if he was on a hill. This blockbuster made the score Sega 2, Nintendo 1.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA  
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1992

TURBOGRAFX 16

## NEUTOPIA



RETRO  
RATING  
**8.5**



**L**ooking at the screens, you may notice that Neutopia bears a striking resemblance to a little game called The Legend of Zelda. This is no coincidence. Neutopia is a very blatant, but highly entertaining clone of the game we rated first in our Top 100 Games of All Time. As a young hero armed with sword and shield, you traverse a varied overworld, bombing walls, burning trees, finding underground dungeons, and trying to save the princess. If your eyes rolled at this description, you're not alone. However, don't let the predictability keep you from playing one of TurboGrafx's better games. There are four big worlds here, instead of Zelda's lone environment. Obviously, the graphics are much better than those on the NES. Also, fire plays a much larger role in things, and can be built up to blast across the screen in Bomberman-esque fashion. Sure Neutopia could be considered a rip-off, but keep your ridiculing to a minimum and you have a high quality quest here.

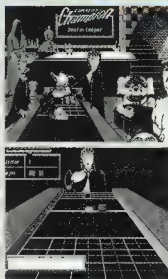
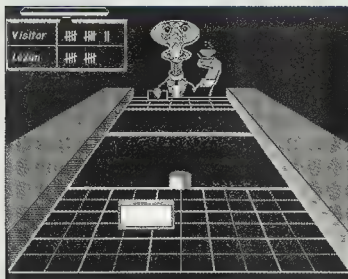
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NEC ■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON  
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1990

MACINTOSH

## SHUFFLEPUCK CAFÉ



RETRO  
RATING  
**9**



**A**ir hockey and its ilk helped start the video game business. Pong came first, then Breakout, then later, Arkanoid, by which time paddle-thwapping had all but disappeared in favor of alien-smiting and dot-chomping. In 1988, however, the revolution returned – albeit as an underground phenomenon. Enter Shufflepuck Café's tavern, and find diverse liferforms waiting to challenge you at air hockey. Using the somewhat new but extremely intuitive mouse peripheral, Mac gamers would attempt to drive the puck in their opponent's goal. Foes ranged from tiny geeks to hulking behemoths; from seductive sorceresses to ugly space-trash. Each had his or her unique style, difficulty, and humorous sound bites and animations. If things were looking too tough, a slew of cheat options were available, including increasing your paddle size, and just plain giving you the win. Shufflepuck Café had endless personality, and deserves recognition as one of the most playable games of all time.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** BRODERBUND ■ **DEVELOPER** BRODERBUND ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1988

PLAYSTATION

## DESTRUCTION DERBY



RETRO  
RATING  
**8.5**



**O**nly the PlayStation could accurately re-create the havoc and shrapnel beauty of a demo derby in 1995, so Psygnosis put out Destruction Derby as one of the console's first titles. Its polygonal graphics were still eye-popping at the time, and the number of cars onscreen is impressive to this day. Modes of play included Stock Car, Destruction Derby (20+ drivers in a last-car-running contest), and Wreckin' Racing (a combo of racing for place and damage points). You could easily monitor the condition of your vehicle, and its performance responded to how banged up it was. Sometimes it wouldn't go left; sometimes that's all it did. A replay function would show off all the realistic damage, polygonal debris and particle smoke effects up close and personal. Back in the day, we were astounded by how great Destruction Derby looked. Today, it almost pains the eyes to watch, and load time is equally distressing. However, the great physics stand the test of time; as does Reflections, which is now working on Stuntman for the PS2.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** PSYGNOSIS ■ **DEVELOPER** REFLECTIONS  
■ **INTERACTIVE** ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995



N64

# GOLDENEYE 007

## CHEATS

Enter all of these codes during gameplay.

**INVINCIBILITY** - L + Down, R + Right C, R + Up C, L + Right, L + Down C, R + Up C, L + Right, R + Down, L + Left, L + R + Right C

**ALL GUNS** - L + R + Down, L + Left C, L + Right C, L + R + Left C, L + Down, L + Down C, R + Left C, L + R + Right C, R + Up, L + Left C

**MAX AMMO** - L + R + Right C, R + Up, R + Down, R + Down, L + R + Right C, L + R + Left, R + Down, R + Up, L + R + Right C, R + Left

**LINE MODE** R + Down C, L + R + Down, L + Right, R + Up C, L + R + Right C, R + Up, L + Down, L + Right, R + Left C, R + Up C

**INVISIBILITY** - R + Left C, L + R + Up C, L + R + Left, L + R + Up, R + Up, L + Left C, R + Up C, L + Down C, L + R + Left, R + Right

**INVISIBILITY (MULTIPLAYER)** - L + Up C, L + R + Left C, R + Up, L + Right C, R + Left C, L + Right, L + R + Left C, L + Right C, L + Up, L + R + Down C



## LEVELS

Enter all of these codes at the Mission Select screen. Note: You'll need to hold the last button press to make the level appear. Levels will only appear if the one before it is open.

**FACILITY** - L + R + Up C, R + Left C, L + Left, R + Up C, L + Left, R + Down C, L + Right C, R + Right, L + R + Up C, L + Right

**RUNWAY** - L + R + Left, R + Left, L + Up C, L + Left, R + Up C, R + Down C, R + Right C, R + Right, L + Down, R + Left C

**SURFACE** - R + Left C, L + R + Up C, L + Left, R + Up, R + Left, L + Up, R + Down C, L + Right, L + Right C, L + R + Down

**BUNKER** - L + Down C, R + Right, L + Right C, R + Left C, L + Down C, L + R + Left, L + Right C, L + R + Up, R + Right C, L + Up

**SILLO** - L + Up, R + Down C, L + Left, R + Down, L + Left C, L + R + Right C, L + Up C, R + Right, R + Right, R + Right C

**FRIGATE** - R + Up C, L + Down, R + Right C, L + Left, L + R + Up, L + R + Down C, R + Right C, R + Up, L + R + Down C, R + Up

**SURFACE II** - L + Down C, L + R + Right C, R + Right C, R + Up C, R + Left C, L + Right C, L + R + Up C, L + Up C, L + R + Down, L + Right C

**BUNKER II** - L + Down, R + Down, L + R + Up C, L + Left, L + R + Right, L + Left C, R + Right, L + Up C, L + Left, L + Down C

**STATUE** - L + R + Down C, L + R + Down C, L + Right, L + R + Left, R + Left, R + Right C, L + R + Left, R + Up C, R + Down C, R + Right

**ARCHIVES** - R + Left, L + R + Up, L + R + Down C, R + Left, L + R + Right C, L + Left, L + R + Right, L + R + Down C, L + Up, R + Down C

**STREETS** - L + R + Left C, L + Right C, L + Up, L + R + Down C, R + Right C, R + Down C, R + Left, R + Down C, R + Up C, L + Down

**DEPOT** - L + Down, L + Down, R + Down C, L + Right C, L + R + Right, R + Left C, L + Down, L + Left C, L + Right C, L + Up

**TRAIN** - R + Left, R + Down C, R + Right C, L + R + Left, L + Right, R + Down C, L + Left, L + R + Left C, L + Up, L + Up C

**JUNGLE** - R + Down C, R + Left, L + R + Up, R + Right, R + Down, R + Down, R + Up, R + Left C, R + Up C, L + R + Left

**CONTROL CENTER** - L + Down C, R + Down, L + Right, R + Right C, R + Down C, R + Left, R + Left, R + Up C, R + Left, L + R + Up C

**CAVERNS** - L + Down, R + Down C, L + R + Up, L + Right, R + Up C, R + Left C, L + Up, L + Left C, L + Up, R + Left C

**CRADLE** - L + R + Up C, L + Left, R + Down, L + Down, L + Up C, L + Down, R + Right, R + Up C, L + Left C, R + Right



## BONUSES

Enter all of these codes at the Cheat Menu.

Note: You'll need to leave this menu and re-enter to make the cheats appear. You may also need to hold the last button press for a few seconds. A sound will signal code completion.

**PAINTBALL** - L + Up, Up C, R + Right, L + R + Left C, L + Up, R + Down C, L + Down C, L + R + Down C, L + R + Up, L + Down C

**DK MODE** - L + R + Up, Right C, R + Left, R + Up, R + Right, Up, L + R + Down C, L + R + Down, L + R + Left C

**TURBO MODE** - L + Down, L + Down C, L + R + Up, R + Down C, Left, R + Down, L + Down C, Up, R + Down, L + Right

**INVINCIBILITY** - R + Left, L + Down, Left, Up, Down, R + Left C, L + Left C, L + R + Left, L + R + Right, L + Left C

**ALL WEAPONS** - Down, Left, Up C, Right, L + Down, L + Left, L + Up, Left C, Left, Down C

**INFINITE AMMO** - L + Left C, L + R + Right, Right C, Left C, R + Left, L + Down C, L + R + Left, L + R + Down C, L + Up, Right C

**2X HUNTING KNIVES** - R + Down C, L + Right, R + Left C, R + Right, L + R + Right, L + R + Up, L + Down, R + Left, L + Right, L + Left C

**2X RCP-90S** - Up, Right, L + Left, R + Down, L + Up, L + Left C, L + Left, Right C, Up C, L + R + Down

**2X LASERS** - L + Right, L + R + Left C, L + Down, R + Left, R + Right, L + Right, Up C, Right, R + Right, L + R + Up

**2X ROCKET LAUNCHER** - R + Right, L + Up, Down, Down, R + Down C, L + Left, L + Left C, R + Up, R + Down, R + Left C



**2X GRENADE LAUNCHER** - R + Down, R + Up, Right, L + R + Down C, L + Right, R + Left, Left, Down, Up, R + Down C

**2X THROWING KNIVES** - R + Left C, L + Left, Up, L + R + Right, Right, L + R + Left C, L + R + Left C, R + Down, R + Left, R + Left C

**NO MULTIPLAYER RADAR** - R + Up, Down C, Left C, Up C, L + Down, R + Up, Left C, Right, L + Left, R + Right

**TINY BOND** - L + R + Down, R + Down, L + Down C, Left, R + Left C, L + R + Down C, Right, Down, R + Down C, R + Right

**INVISIBLE BOND** - L + R + Left C, L + R + Down C, L + Left C, R + Left C, R + Right, L + R + Left, L + Right, Left, L + R + Left C, L + Down

**FAST ANIMATION** - L + Down C, L + Left C, Down C, Right C, Left C, L + R + Right, Right C, L + R + Up, R + Left C, L + Left

**SLOW ANIMATION** - L + R + Left, L + R + Left, L + R + Down, L + R + Left, Right C, L + R + Down, L + R + Down, L + Down, Left C, L + Up C

**ENEMY ROCKETS** - L + R + Down C, Left C, R + Down C, Down C, Down C, L + R + Down C, L + R + Up, Down C, R + Up, L + Up

**SILVER PP7** - L + Left, L + R + Up, L + Right, L + R + Up, L + R + Left C, L + R + Left, L + R + Down, Down C, L + R + Left, L + R + Left

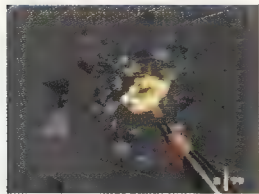
**GOLD PP7** - L + R + Right, L + R + Down, L + Up, L + R + Down, Up C, R + Up, L + R + Right, L + Left, Down, L + Down C



## GOLDENEYE 007 WALKTHROUGH

This stellar walkthrough covers all the missions for Agent, Secret Agent, and 00 Agent difficulty levels. Not all of the objectives listed are necessary for the first two difficulties, but can be completed nonetheless.

### MISSION 1: BELLMORT DAM



When you open up the security checkpoints and the truck drives through, you'll see a soldier dressed in green, running for an alarm. Take him out as quickly as possible, then disable the alarm. Just a few steps to the right, behind a series of boxes, lies the uplink station. Toss the Covert Modem onto it. Continue forward and shoot the lock on the gate to reach the dam. From here, use the Sniper Rifle to dispose of the enemies patrolling the grounds. Destroy the alarms posted at the entrance of all three towers to complete Objective A. Next, head into the third tower, then descend to the sewer system. At this point, you may want to seek cover. Dispose of the guards as carefully as you can, making sure that you don't hit the mainframes. Once the coast is clear, activate the mainframe. From here, exit the sewer system and hop off of the dam to finish the mission.

### MISSION 2: ARKANGELSK CHEMICAL WEAPONS FACILITY #2

Dispose of the constipated adversary, then drop into the stall next to him. Clear out the bathroom, then exit. Head down the stairs and cautiously work your way through the halls. Pass through a series of rooms and you reach a guard with his back to you. Blast him and grab the keycard he drops. From here, head back to the stairway near the bathrooms. Directly across the way is a metallic door. Use the keycard to gain access. Activate the computer, then sprint to the door in the back. Be wary not to shoot any scientists as you clear out the general vicinity. Nearby, you'll run into a locked door. Fire the KF7 at the door and a guard will open it. If you can get in, you'll complete Objective A. Now, search any and all rooms for Dr. Doak. He appears randomly, but shouldn't be too difficult to track down. Once you do, he will hand over the Door Decoder. Use the Decoder on the next locked door you run into. Talk with OOG. At this point you will need to strategically place the five Mines in your possession on the bottling tanks. The detonation needs to clear out all ten tanks. If you can do this, Objective D will come to a close. Now, simply run through the door in the back.

### MISSION 3: RUNWAY

Locate and secure the Mines. Descend from the platform to the runway. Run as quickly as you can to the right and enter the small building. Take out the guards, then pick up the Ignition Key. Backtrack and veer to the left to run into a tank. Hop in and mow down everyone who stands in

your path. Use your newfound power to take out the gun emplacements scattered across this stage. Now, head over to the plane and blow away the Missile Battery. The last thing you'll need to do is jump out of the tank and catch the runaway plane. Piece of cake.

### MISSION 4: SEVERNYA INSTALLATION



Use the Sniper Rifle to dispose of the enemies traversing the snow. Run past the first cabin and enter the next one you see. Grab the Grenade Launcher, then backtrack to the first cabin. Inside you will find the Safe Key. An unlimited amount of guards will open fire, so run toward the satellite dish, but pull up short and head left toward a fenced-in area. Enter the cabin and access the safe to find the Building Plans. With the documents in hand, enter the satellite dish. Locate the computer and activate it to power down the satellite. Leave, then continue forward to the tower. Once inside, shoot out the looks to make the grate fall. Jump in to complete the level.

### MISSION 5: SATELLITE CONTROL BUNKER



Dispose of the guards and destroy the alarm. Turn back and head into the next room. Take out the ceiling-mounted camera, then backtrack to the previous room. Peer through the glass on the door and destroy the camera to the right. Enter the hall and head to the left. Make another left at the next crossing, then dispose of the camera at the end of the hallway. One of the guards along the way should have dropped the Computer Room Keycard. Use it to gain access to the computer room. Now, head left down the stairs. Swarms of guards patrol this massive control area. Take them out, but don't converse with Boris just yet. First, eliminate the camera on the platform to the left and the guards to the right. Now, use the Camera to photograph the digital map. You can now confront Boris and take the GoldenEye Key from the desk. When Boris flees, follow closely. While in pursuit, use the Key Analyzer on the GoldenEye Key. Toss the GoldenEye Key wherever you please. Boris will eventually hack into the computer. Wait for him to do so, then use the DataHief to download the information. The alarms will go off, yet the objec-

tive will be completed. Now, race through the hordes of Janus forces to the control room exit.

### MISSION 6: SOVIET MISSILE SILO



This stage is a bear. You'll only have 8:30 to complete it, and you essentially must be perfect in your execution of the objectives. Move forward and ascend the stairs, using the PP7 to dispose of the baddies that come gunning for you. The peek-and-shoot tactic is a must here, as well. Once cleaned out, head into the large room. Dispose of the guard and grab the Keycard from the scientist. Walk over to the desk and snag the two Circuit Boards. Plant Plasticine on the fuel tanks, then head up the stairs. Pass through the series of doors leading to the right. In the next large room, repeat the tactic you used before of securing the Keycard and Circuit Board, and also planting Plasticine. Ascend the stairway and maneuver to the right. Repeat the strategy you've used twice already, but this time, look to the right for the DAT. Plant more Plasticine, then ascend the stairs. You'll find much needed Body Armor through the door to the left, but again, the direction you want to head is to the right. Plant the last of your Plasticine, then photograph the GoldenEye Satellite. From here, make a dash for the exit. In doing so, you'll confront Oorunov. Blast away at him and he'll eventually flee. Now sprint to the elevator!

### MISSION 7: FRIGATE "LA FAYETTE"

Work your way up the ramp and hug the right side of the ship. Ascend the set of stairs directly ahead and blast the Janus guards that stand in your path. Enter the door to the right of one of the guards you just downed. Shoot the terrorists to save the hostage. Another hostage situation is going down just to the right. Eliminate the threat, then continue forward down two flights of stairs. Enter the door closest to the stairs to reach the engine room. Rescue the poor crewman. Head up the other stairway to find a computer with Plasticine on it. Use the Bomb Defuser to deactivate the explosive device. Exit through the door just behind you, then maneuver forward. Rescue the hostages that you run into, then head to the outdoor helicopter and plant the Tracker Bug on it. It's now time to head to the bridge. Save the crewman and defuse the Plasticine on the computer. Now that every objective is complete, return to your boat.

### MISSION 8: SURFACE

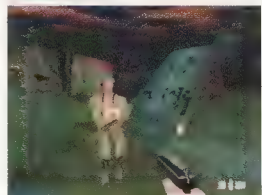
Traverse the path and locate the rightmost cabin with a security camera on the outside. Shoot out the camera, and enter. Blast the soldier to get the Comms Room Key. From here, head to the Satellite Dish. Pass through the door and disable the security camera before heading to the Comms Room. Blow up the computer on the table. Evacuate the Satellite Dish and trek to the fenced area. A camera accompanies each

cabin grouping, so make sure you take them out before running forward. Once all of the cameras are taken out, head back toward the Satellite Dish and continue along the path to the helipad. Plant the Mine on the helicopter, then enter the bunker through the door.

### MISSION 9: SATELLITE CONTROL BUNKER

This is another incredibly difficult stage. To start out, switch to your Watch Magnet and use it to grab the Cell Key from the wall. Wait until the guard has his back to you, then open the door and use your kung fu to take him out. He will drop the other Cell Key. You'll also find Throwing Knives within the general vicinity. Before you open Natalya's cell, clear out the guards in the hallway. One of them will drop Keycard A. Also, enter the room directly to the left (after the hall leading to the left) to get Safe Key 1. Now, ascend the stairs, then maneuver into the yellow and gray corridor. Destroy the ceiling-mounted drone gun, then head through the door and remove the second batch of drones. From here, backtrack to a locked door. Take out the security camera. Proceed forward into the computer room (you've been here in a previous mission), making sure to take down any surveillance equipment along the way. You'll eventually run across Safe Key 2. Bring it back to the room where you found the first Key and use it on the safe to get the GoldenEye Operations Manual. Head out and enter the door to the left. Enter the large room and grab the Casualty List that a guard drops on the floor. Backtrack to a deeper section of the bunker. In one of the rooms you'll find the Severnaya Staff List. Again, explore the areas you haven't covered yet, being extremely cautious of the cameras scattered about. In one of the rooms, you'll stumble across the CCTV Video Tape. Now, remove any remaining cameras. If you get them all, Objective C will be completed. Finally, return to the prison and free Natalya. Head to the control room and run through the glass doors as Natalya investigates the computer.

### MISSION 10: ST. PETERSBURG STATUE PARK



This stage is a tad confusing to navigate, yet the objectives are quite easy. Work your way along the rightmost path to a large red crate. Enter it to contact Vladimir. Now, locate the statue of Vladimir (which is back just a little further). Body Armor can be picked up along the way near the hand sculpture. Hide your weapons and OOG will talk with you. Retreat back to the beginning of the level when the conversation gets ugly. You'll eventually run into a helicopter. Wake up Natalya and run as far away from the helicopter as you can. It will explode, leaving the Flight Recorder nearby. Find it. Now, return to the gates to complete the stage.



# MISSION 11: GRU MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ARCHIVES



The best way to handle this level is to holster your guns and use your incredible slapping power. Doing this will greatly reduce the number of adversaries you'll face. Grab the Interrogation Room Key, then head to the right and up the stairs. Clear out the surrounding rooms and you'll eventually run into Natalya. Do not fire! She will run after you. Exit through the double doors and down the stairs. Locate Mishkin and he will hand over the Safe Key. Open the safe to get the Blackbox. Finally, locate a window and destroy the glass. Exit as quickly as you can.

# MISSION 12: ST PETERSBURG STREETS



Run forward past the tank and through the winding alleys to an open house on the left. Enter and talk with Valentin. When he runs away, he will add more time to the clock. Now, leave and pass through the window of the building to the left. Grab the Body Armor, then head back to the tank. Hop in and destroy everything in your path (except the civilians, of course). If you confront a soldier with a Rocket Launcher, turn around and find a different way. Just keep pressing forward until the end.

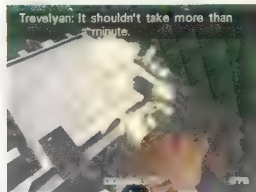
# MISSION 13: MILITARY DEPOT



Cautiously navigate the piles of crates until you come to a crossroads. Head left through the fence gate and take a right. Enter the second warehouse to the right to find the Rocket Launcher, Proximity Mines, and an assortment of additional firepower. Head up the stairs and plant several Mines on the brown boxes below. Shoot one of the mines to destroy the weapons cache. Exit the warehouse and backtrack to the left to

another warehouse on the right. Knock out the drone gun in the left corner, then destroy the two mainframes and the wall monitor. Also, grab the Safe Key from the desk. Now, go back toward the warehouse with the weapons cache and head to the left. After you pass a house that is boarded up, enter the next one on the right. Ascend the stairs and open the safe to get the Blueprints. Exit via the second-level door, then leave the warehouse and open the doors on the train.

# MISSION 14: MILITARY TRAIN

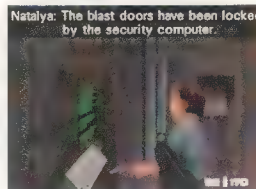


This stage is fairly one-dimensional. Just run from car to car, and eliminate the threat in each. Also, make sure that you destroy all of the security consoles (the little red and yellow things attached to the floor). You'll eventually reach Trevelyan's room. Take out Oorumov and Xenia as quickly as you can. If you do take out Xenia, you will get a few more seconds added to the clock. At this point, use the Watch Laser to remove the looks on the floor grate. Wait for Natalya to hack into the computer and secure the passwords, then drop out of the train and run.

# MISSION 15: CUBA JUNGLE

Progress through the foliage, taking out any guards that come your way. As you maneuver forward, keep your eyes peeled for drone guns. You'll want to remove these as quickly as possible. Also, when you cross the bridge, Xenia will attack. You should be able to knock her down before she makes it across the bridge. Grab her weapons, remove the drone to the left, then move deeper into the jungle. Carefully enter the mouth of the cave. Eliminate the oppressors and continue moving forward. Blast the drones along the way to complete the objective. Also, drop some Remote Mines on the ammo boxes to take care of Objective C as well. The rest of the stage is a breeze. Use whatever means you have to move through the guards to the end.

# MISSION 16: CONTROL CENTER



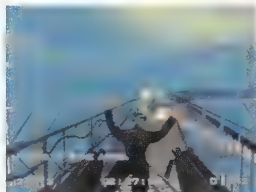
Immediately after opening the elevator doors, drones will shower bullets on you. Hide in the corner and shoot back as you strafe across. Clear out the area, then return to Natalya. She will begin hacking into the security system. Pass through the door she opens. Pick up the Remote Mines from the rock path, then go past the

crates into the expansive opening. Head up the stairs and plant two Mines on the mainframes near Boris. Also, if you ascend to the next floor, Body Armor awaits through a ventilation grate. From here, return to where you met Boris and enter the door on the side. Remove all of the drone guns (two beside the room entry) and move forward. Plant another Mine on the main frame within this room. Return to the control room and ascend the stairs. Open the brown door to the right to let Natalya in. When she begins hacking, an alarm will sound and soldiers will pour into the room. Take out as many of them as you can. You'll have to continue the killing spree until Natalya finishes. Protect her at all costs. After a few minutes, she will jump up the stairs. Let her go, then enter the other brown door. Place a Mine on the mainframe and blow it away to finish the objective. When the guards begin storming in, grab the Body Armor and blow away anyone who is brave enough to dance with you. Now, reach the elevator.

# MISSION 17: CAVERNS

With guns ablaze, move through the caverns to the bridge. Toss a Timed Mine onto the crates below to unearth much needed ammo. Destroy the consoles, then squeeze between the narrow rock passage. Blow away the computers to complete the first objective. Ascend the stairs and head into the spiraling portion of this cave. In the next room, a Timed Mine will eliminate all of the guards. Also, the crates hold more ammo. Now, progress along the lower ramps, then ascend the stairs at the end. Enter the door and clear out the baddies. Activate the radio near the scientists. Once the scientists flee, shoot the oil drums to take out the computer. Grab the Code Card and move deeper into the caves via the walkways. Destroy all of the consoles you see, then navigate the series of Star Wars-like tunnels. Spray hot lead at anyone standing in your way, then enter the elevator.

# MISSION 18: CRADLE



Grab the Body Armor behind you, then run up the suspension bridge. Take out all of the guards and drones along the way. Blow up the control console to complete the first objective. If you need more health, another Body Armor is tucked in the shed directly across. At this point, it's time to go after Trevelyan. Follow him out of the shed and stay off of the lower platforms. Just keep firing bullets at him and take him out.

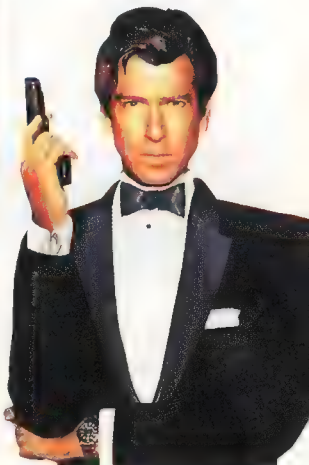
# MISSION 19: AZTEC

This stage is insanely tough, but it's also quite amazing. To unlock it, you'll need to complete all of the stages on the 00 Agent difficulty. Start out by clearing out the rooms and blowing up the computer console. Use the ventilation system to remove the drone guns. You'll also run across Body Armor. After a bit of running and

killing, you'll reach a ladder. Activate the console, then run for the stars. You'll run into Jaws...yes Jaws. Use Grenades, Lasers, whatever you have on him. When he falls, grab the Smart Card. With it in hand, return through the vents to the mainframe room. Open the glass doors and head over to the shuttle. Use the DAT Tape on the mainframe, then climb the ladder. Activate the computer to begin the countdown. Once it reaches zero, the stage is over.

# MISSION 20: EGYPTIAN TEMPLE

Again, you'll need to complete every stage (as well as the Aztec level) on the 00 Agent difficulty to unlock this stage. Unlike the previous mission, this one is a breeze. Navigate the pillars and grab the ZMGs the guards drop. Head into the next room, then enter the passageway on the right wall. Ascend the stairs, then pass through the hidden wall (just keep hitting B to find it). Ahead awaits the Golden Gun. To get it, you will need to step on the correct floor tiles. If you don't, drone guns will drop down and blow you away. Start out on the left side of the room (far left). Go up two squares, over to the right three squares, up two more, over one to the right, up one, to the right once more, up two, then one more to the right. Piece of cake! Grab the sacred gun and access another hidden door to the left. Snatch up the Body Armor, then locate yet another secret door. You'll run across Baron Samedi in the next room. Take him out. Now, backtrack toward the pool at the beginning. The Baron will reappear. Two shots with the Golden Gun should do the trick. For some strange reason, the lighting disappears. Maneuver toward the Golden Gun room again. Instead of heading up the stairs, veer to the right. Grab the Body Armor and use the Golden Gun on the Baron again. This time it will take three shots. That's it, boys and girls. The game is complete.



## OPENING THE XBOX: INSIDE MICROSOFT'S PLAN TO UNLEASH AN ENTERTAINMENT REVOLUTION

Manufacturer: Prima Publishing

Website: [www.primapublishing.com/books/book/5877/](http://www.primapublishing.com/books/book/5877/)

List Price: \$24.95

As a fly-on-the-wall story of the wheelings and dealings that Microsoft and its top guns went through to bring us the industry's third soldier in the console wars, *Opening the Xbox* holds nothing back. Intimate accounts abound concerning how a few free-thinking Microsoft employees convinced the world's wealthiest man to challenge industry giants Nintendo and Sony, then set off to create an entertainment dynasty. Painstaking detail was put into every chapter of the 300-plus-page book – sometimes right down to how the food was at industry parties: "The food [at the E3 Microsoft party], barbecue chicken and beans, was terrible and overcooked." How's that for detail? Also included are accounts from the Xbox's rocky inception, to its eventual launch, and everything that went on in between. Believe us, there was a hell of a lot of crazy stuff that went down which no one has ever heard about until now. We highly recommend anyone who has the slightest interest in this industry to pick up this fascinating book.



## OPENING THE XBOX

Inside Microsoft's Plan to Unleash an Entertainment Revolution



DEAN TAKAHASHI  
FOREWORD BY SEAMUS BLACKLEY

## GBA TV CONVERTER

Manufacturer: Innovation • Website: [www.innovation1.com](http://www.innovation1.com)

List Price: \$75.99

In the ongoing struggle to make things bigger and better, Innovation has devised a way to connect your Game Boy Advance to your television. Yes, this sounds like an awesome idea, and it definitely is. However, assembling this contraption should not be taken lightly. You're provided two screwdrivers to help you, which is nice; but they're quite small, which makes getting those little screws out quite a challenge. Once you've opened up the GBA, you must fasten a circuit line from the translator module that comes with the unit, to the main board on the Game Boy. Although there's no soldering involved (thank goodness), the picture we got for all of our work was decent, but not unbelievable. You'll need to think long and hard about how ready you are to monkey around with the circuitry on your favorite road-trip buddy for the chance to play it on a big screen, especially since this tampering will void Nintendo's warranty.



## TRANSFORMERS GI

Manufacturer: Dream Wave Productions

Website: [www.dreamwaveprod.com](http://www.dreamwaveprod.com)

List Price: TBA

This May, Transformers fans around the world will be treated to an entirely new comic series based on the Generation 1 characters. Written by Chris Sarracini and featuring the art of Pat Lee, all of our favorite Autobots and Decepticons are about to come back, and in a big way. The inhabitants of Earth have thought these robotic monstrosities were dead for years now, – little do they know, they're dead wrong. Numerous questions abound, but the ones on everyone's mind is "Where have they been for so long?" Why have they chosen to return now? Most importantly, who is this mysterious Lazarus guy, and what does he have up his sleeve? We have no idea, but this art almost made us wet our pants when we saw it for the first time. Look at the amount of detail put into each and every character. For those of us who grew up on the old-school Transformers, reading this comic series will be like coming home again.



## CRASH AND SPYRO MINI-FIGURES

Manufacturer: Vending Machines • Website: N/A • List Price: 50¢

Okay, you're sitting around your house with nothing to do and nowhere to go. You're a loser, but that's fine. We are, too. Now get up off that ass-groove in the couch you've been working on for the past nine hours, and go to your favorite place for vending goodness. If you're lucky, you'll find these guys safely encased in little plastic eggs. You can do anything you want with them – pose them in fighting stances, hang them from your rearview mirror, glue them to your dog, whatever you feel like doing. They're soft enough to throw at your sister without leaving a mark, too. What a great toy! Of course, we here at Game Informer Magazine would never condone violence against one's sibling, or fastening assorted items to one's pet. We're just saying it's possible. See the distinction? Spyro, Crash, Tiny, Cortex, and many others are only 50 cents and a handle-turn away.





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